

THE MYSTIC'S VISION: VOLUME ONE

Selected Writings of Swami Abhayananda

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Introduction

This book contains a hand-picked collection of excerpts from my books and other selected articles written over the past thirty years. They are presented in two volumes and cover a broad range of spiritual topics relating to mystical experience as well as some science-based speculations.

Most of my books are currently Out of Print, but, for many years, I have made all my books and other writings available as free downloadable PDF documents at my website called “The Mystic’s Vision” (www.themysticsvision.com). Now that I am in my late seventies, without heirs, and do not foresee the reprinting of my earlier books, it seems to me appropriate to make available to future readers a convenient collection of what I consider some of my best writings.

I am in hopes that this collection of my writings will be downloaded and maintained by many of my readers in order to guarantee their preservation and dissemination when I am no longer around to share them with you. Many thanks to all of you who have supported my writings with your kind appreciations over the years. I hope and pray that each and every one of you is blessed by God in this life to know His eternal presence. Namaste.

— Swami Abhayananda, 2016

I. CREATION:

In the revealed Vision of the Mystic, all of Creation is experienced as contained in the One Being, in God, in the divine Mind that constitutes one's own divine Self. This being so, we must establish a theory of Creation that is consistent with that revealed truth. The Judaic scriptures, written a millennium before the time of Jesus, attempted to explain the Creation of the world as the handiwork of an anthropomorphic God who molded everything with His hands, and trod the earth, conversing with humans. But these imaginations, while adequate for an ancient world, are no longer acceptable to people of the modern world. Today, we understand that God, the Creator of the universe, is not a man-like being, but is a universal Mind whose Creation is a manifestation of His own energy, and takes place entirely within Him; and that, since we humans are His own imaginary creations, He is the divine Identity, or Soul, of whom we are manifestations, and who lives within every one of us.

As we humans evolve in understanding, we discover many things about God's Creation: we learn that God's Energy and Matter are basically the same thing in slightly different guises and are interconvertible. So that, when a great burst of God's energy, in the form of electromagnetic radiation, was released around fourteen billion years ago, that huge, powerful burst of energy began to transform into material wave-particles that, in turn, formed into the gases, liquids, and solid materials that makes up our phenomenal universe. That original Energy, the creative power of God, gave birth to a universe within His own living Consciousness, and so the world of His Creation purposely evolved to include multitudes of conscious living beings. These beings, born of the Mind of God, and formed by His Creative Power, increased and flourished throughout the earth, giving manifest expression to His infinite joy—and that is who you and I are. The revelation of that Divine Identity comes by God's merciful grace to those whose hearts are opened to His love.

1. First Light (4-8-2013)

We earthlings tend to associate light with our Sun, but what of the *First Light*, the light which in the beginning produced all of the suns and planets within the entire universe? That original Light was an Energy whose source transcended our present phenomenal universe, since this universe did not yet exist. It was an Energy sufficient to produce by its self-conversion to particulate matter the phenomenal appearance of an immense and dynamic universe, a universe made solely of that First Light.

That sudden burst of First Light that signaled ‘the beginning’ nearly fourteen billion years ago was no mere run of the mill light-show; it was a teeming, roiling rush of the most intensely furious maelstrom of concentrated Energy imaginable. The light of a billion hydrogen bombs could not begin to compare with it. Indeed, all of the mass-energy that goes to make up our current universe was contained within that burst of light. It permeates our universe as that original Energy, and also as every one of the aggregated material wave-particles into which it converted. That *First Light* is Itself this vast illusion we call ‘the universe’ and can only be described and explained as the Creative Power of the Divine Being.

Who else could have produced such a powerful and potent force? Does He not deserve to be regarded as the one Divinity, the Creator of the cosmos and all that exists within it? And yet *how* could it possibly have been done? Only He knows, and it is doubtful that we shall ever be able to comprehend the nature of His abilities and powers. Suffice it to say that a vibratory Energy was produced from within Himself that spread as waves which human creatures refer to as ‘electromagnetic (EM) radiation’. This radiation covers a broad spectrum, from the highest measured frequencies to the lowest. The highest frequency radiation is called ‘gamma radiation’, and it is at this highest frequency that EM radiation is capable of converting from radiant energy to mass, i.e., to matter.

The light that spreads as waves of energy can also appear to us as particles, strangely enough. We can measure the frequency of these waves, but we don’t know exactly what it is that’s waving or vibrating. The medium through which these waves of light propagate is also unknown, though we know its constant rate of movement. And yet physicists talk about Light as though they know what it is, pretending that it is explicable according to commonly understood physical principles; but, of course, it is an absolute mystery. And since this light—this

electromagnetic radiation—is the foundational reality underlying all phenomena, the fountainhead of all that is manifest as this universe, we are led to acknowledge that our being and the being of the phenomenal universe is also an absolute mystery, despite all our pretenses to the contrary.

And what of life and consciousness? These are undoubtedly the very qualities of God! The infinite expression of life, consciousness, and bliss: that is what God is! And we, His Mind-born creatures, live within Him, and partake of His Being. No need to know much more than that. In Him we live and move; one Mind alone, self-replicated in myriad forms, comprises all. In Him this Light-born show evolves and runs its course, each fragile bubble of awareness the one inseparable Self entire.

And as each fragile bubble of awareness evolves, the desire to know its source and reality increases, until at last each delicate bubble bursts its confines and comes to know its unlimited and deathless Self. No longer contained or separate, but merged into the unlimited Being of the One, it knows itself as the eternally undivided Self of all—the Giver, the recipient, and the gift; Beloved, lover, love; candle, flame, and eye; Seer, seen, and sight.

* * *

2. The Phenomenon of Light

(from *Reflections On The Soul*, 2010; rev. 7-17-2017)

According to the standard scientific ‘Big Bang’ model of the origin of the universe, the Big Bang was the explosive expansion of a ‘singularity’, a pre-existent primary state consisting of an ultra-dense concentration of mass-energy in an infinitesimal space.¹ Yet those scientists who accept this model have refused to speculate on where, why, and how such an infinitely dense concentration of mass-energy came to be in the first place. That, they say, is beyond the purview of ‘empirical science’; and, of course, it is.

A *singularity*, I am told, is a mathematical function of the theory of Relativity, and the possibility of its actual existence only derives from its mathematical existence. I have to wonder, however, why physicists have been so ready to accept the idea of a *singularity* as the prelude to ‘the Big Bang’, but have been so unwilling to give consideration to the theory of the “creation” or “emanation” by a transcendent Mind of a sudden initial burst of Energy that subsequently resulted in the formation of expanding matter by a process of energy-matter conversion. The answer is that science, by definition, simply does not allow for the possibility of a supernaturally initiated cosmogony! One cannot help but wonder, therefore, if the Big Bang cosmology of contemporary physics is merely an ideational framework constructed to avoid acknowledging the possibility of a supernatural Origin for our universe and ourselves.

Regardless of whether or not it was constructed for that purpose, the *singularity* theory provides an ideational framework that is currently in disarray, and greatly in doubt even by its originators, with no legitimate alternative to take its place. But, let us now depart from science’s flimsy materialistic model, and make a bold and adventurous inquiry into the possibility that it might have been (Divine) Energy that started it all, and let’s see where this theory takes us. If we hypothesize that it was the appearance of a sudden flash of Divine Energy that precipitated this expanding universe, we must ask, “What kind of Energy could result in a material universe?” There is an ancient, pre-scientific, tradition in India according to which, the material universe was produced from sound: the *pranava*, said to be audible as the sound, “Aum”, or “Om”. No one, however, has succeeded in producing matter from this or any other sound, or even formulating a process by which this might be accomplished. Indeed, it appears that *sound* itself is in all cases produced by matter; not the other way around. However, it is a proven fact

that *light-energy* is transformable to material particles—energy and matter being interchangeable states of the same thing.

We must ask, then, “Mightn’t it have been an immense burst of what we have come to call ‘electromagnetic radiation’ —in other words, *Light*—that produced this vast universe of forms?” Light certainly would fit the requirements! And such a beginning would not only provide a confirmation of the account found in many religious documents; it would clearly account for the initial heat and expansion known to have been produced in the earliest stages of the universe’s origin.

Scientists of our contemporary world have not seriously considered this theory, however. The suggestion that the physical cosmos had a ‘supernatural’ origin places that origin outside the confines of ‘nature’ and therefore firmly outside the consideration of empirical science. Rather than positing a spiritual source, or even a radiant energy source, the immediate instinct of scientists is to suppose that there was an original physical entity that somehow ‘blew up’, scattering matter throughout the length and breadth of space-time. But, just for the purpose of following out the supernaturally produced Light theory to its logical ends, let us imagine for a moment that in the beginning there *was* a supernaturally produced burst of high-energy light, and examine whether or not the existence of space-time and this material universe could possibly have formed and evolved from that initial Energy burst:

Anyone familiar with the peculiar nature and behavior of light must be profoundly struck by the stubborn incomprehensibility of this unique and elusive ‘stuff’. Many scientists and philosophers over the ages have sought to comprehend the nature of light without success, among them Albert Einstein. Though Einstein made extraordinary discoveries involving light’s invariable speed, its relation to the measurement of time and space, and its corpuscular nature, he was never able to fathom just what this ‘stuff’ called “light” *is*. In 1917, long after the publication of his Special and General Theories of Relativity, he wrote: “For the rest of my life I will reflect on what light is!”;² and thirty-four years later, in 1951, he admitted: “All the fifty years of conscious brooding have brought me no closer to the answer to the question, ‘What are light quanta [photons]?’ Of course, today every rascal thinks he knows the answer, but he is deluding himself.”³

Why is light so difficult to comprehend? Einstein’s perplexity over the nature of light was based on the recognition that, at the submicroscopic quantum level, the properties of light are inconceivable and incomprehensible. A photon of light is

neither wave nor particle, though it can appear in either guise. It is not a substance, but an intangible and indefinable *essence* that some have likened to a mental rather than a physical reality; and yet all that we perceive as the physical, ‘material’ world is made of it. This ‘stuff’ called *light*, at its highest frequencies, is miraculously endowed with the ability to transform itself into what we call ‘material’ particles. And, even though we can describe and predict this transformation, it is clearly an *a priori* capability that can only be described as “miraculous”. In addition, light, by its very nature, expands from its source at a constant and absolute 300,000 metres/sec. Space-time is measurable only in relation to this absolute speed of light radiation. So, if the initial appearance of light created space-time, those space-time parameters would have expanded at the rate of 300,000 metres/sec. Space-time, it seems, is merely an *effect* of light, and as it expanded, that light cooled and transformed itself into material (mass-bearing) particles, and the expansion rate of the material universe decreased accordingly.

Light, or electromagnetic radiation, does not consist of matter; that is, it has no mass, but is an insubstantial, though ubiquitous, form of energy. Nonetheless, in its most energetic states, it is convertible into ‘matter’; and *vice versa*. This is due to the now well-known interconvertibility of mass and energy, according to Einstein’s formula: $E=mc^2$. For example, when an electron bound to a nucleus makes a “quantum jump” from a higher energy level (orbital) to a lower one, it gives off that same amount of energy in the form of a photon of light. When an electron and a positron (its antiparticle opposite) collide, they both annihilate in a flash of light (photons). When a proton and an antiproton collide, they are both annihilated in a flash of light (photons). Why are mass and energy interconvertible? No one knows. Apparently, these particles and antiparticles are merely returning to their ‘ground’ state. From light they came, and to light they must return.

“Visible light”, as we all know, forms but a small segment of the electrical and magnetic field that extends outwardly from its source in wavelike undulations of varying frequencies and wavelengths, called the electromagnetic (EM) spectrum. In the vacuum of space, EM radiation travels nearly 300 million meters (186,000 miles) per second, or 670 million miles per hour; and can be variously described and labeled according to its different wavelengths. But, as Albert Einstein has shown, it is also measurable as tiny packets or *quanta* of energy called *photons*, measured according to their energy in electron volts (eV). Light can be described either as a wave or a particle, depending on the method used to measure it. And though no one seems able to rationally describe or account for this wave-particle

duality, in order to make some verbal sense of it, we say that EM waves are *associated with*, or *complementary to*, the light quanta known as photons. Naturally, *matter* also possesses this characteristic of wave-particle duality, since *matter* is nothing more than light-*energy* appearing as (converted to) form and substance.

The entire EM spectrum includes cosmic gamma rays, x-rays, ultraviolet light, the visible spectrum, infrared, microwaves, radar, FM radio, AM radio, and Direct electrical current; ranging in wavelength from 10^{-15} (.000000000000001 meter) to indefinitely long. At one end of the EM spectrum, this charged field vibrates as short transverse waves of very high frequency; these are the gamma-rays and x-rays. At the other end of the spectrum, wave lengths can be indefinitely long and the frequencies very low; these are the radio and long-wave radio waves. In between the high and low-frequency waves of this spectrum are varying EM wavelengths such as those of visible light. Visible light is but a small portion of the EM spectrum, consisting of wavelengths from 0.4 to 0.7 micrometers (one millionth of a meter)—i.e., about half the length of a bacterium.

As in all wavular phenomena, the shorter the wavelength, the higher is the wave's frequency; and the longer the wavelength, the lower is the wave's frequency. Frequency is measured in units called hertz (abbreviated Hz.), after the nineteenth century German physicist, Heinrich Hertz. One hertz means one oscillation per second. For example, radio waves in AM broadcasting have a wavelength of 300 meters and vibrate at a frequency ranging from 530 kilohertz (530,000 hertz) to 1.6 megahertz (1,600,000 hertz). By contrast, gamma rays, with the extremely short wavelength of 10^{-15} meter, may have the incredible frequency of 300 Ehz (one exahertz=one quintillion [10^{18}] hertz).

Though light is energy, and massless, it can be converted, or transformed, into mass-bearing material particles (according to the formula: $E=mc^2$). In fact, high energy, short-wavelength light (such as gamma radiation) routinely decays spontaneously into particle-antiparticle pairs—and vice versa. When we speak of high-energy light as an EM *wave*, we speak of it as high-frequency (300 Ehz), short wavelength (10^{-15} m) radiation; when we speak of it as *particulate*, or *corpuscular*, we must regard it as consisting of photons, each photon with an energy in the realm of 1.24 MeV (million electron volts).

Gamma rays, then, are the highest frequency EM waves known, consisting of the highest energy photons, so far discovered. These waves can originate in the nuclei

of atoms and may be released by nuclear explosions. They can also be produced in certain laboratory experiments, for example, by certain radioactive materials, or when a particle and an antiparticle annihilate each other. Conversely, gamma rays are capable of decaying spontaneously into particle/antiparticle pairs, such as an electron and a positron. Gamma rays also exist naturally throughout the cosmos, even showing up in the formation of terrestrial lightning bolts. In 1997, astronomers using the Compton Gamma Ray Observatory (GRO) satellite, found evidence for a gigantic, diffuse halo of gamma rays around our own Milky Way galaxy that they are currently endeavoring to know more about; and distant cosmic gamma ray bursts appear almost daily to astronomer's telescopes.

Cosmic gamma ray bursts are brief bursts of high-energy light that come to us from up to 12 billion light-years away (in other words, light that was emanated 12 billion years ago). Astronomers have speculated that they are from distant supernovae, giant collapsing stars in the midst of their death-throes; although researchers could find no supernova associated with a 2006 burst observed by NASA's Swift satellite. In March of 2008, the same NASA satellite recorded "the brightest explosion ever seen" when a massive star, 7.5 billion light-years away, collapsed to form a black hole, driving powerful gamma ray jets outward. In September of 2009, another gamma ray burst (designated GRB090902B) produced even higher energies—up to 33.4 billion electron volts or about 13 billion times the energy of visible light.⁴ Such cosmic gamma ray bursts are so energetic that their brightness is equal to the brightness of all the stars of the entire universe combined. One burst of 10 seconds duration can release more energy than the light emitted by our sun in its entire 10 billion-year lifetime.

As we earlier suggested, it is possible that all the matter in this universe originated from a spectacularly large burst of high-energy light, or electromagnetic radiation; but is such an evolution, from light to matter, possible? Yes; as we have seen, it is. It *is* possible and highly probable that, in the very earliest moments of the Big Bang, in that unimaginably hot, spreading radiation field, the densely packed, intensely active, high-energy photons, in the process of colliding with one another, transformed into mass-bearing particles and antiparticles. And, while nearly all of the resulting particle/antiparticle pairs created by these collisions would have been annihilated upon contact with each other, as it happens, there was produced an as yet unexplainable disparity or "asymmetry"⁵ in the total number of particles over antiparticles; and for that reason, there would still have been one-in-every ten billion particles remaining—in the form of electrons, protons, and neutrons—to constitute the building blocks of the entire material universe.

This fact lends credence to the theory that a sudden burst of (Divine) Energy in the form of an intense field of electromagnetic radiation, *and not the explosion of a pre-existent super-dense speck of condensed mass-energy*, constituted the origin of our universe. But, of course, such a “Big Burst” theory could be regarded as a scientifically viable alternative to the ‘Big Bang’ theory only as a non-falsifiable speculation, one not subject to experimental confirmation. Both possibilities are equally plausible, and equally unconfirmable. Even the Cosmic Background Microwave Energy that was detected by Penzias and Wilson might be cited as evidence for either the ‘Big Burst’ scenario *or* the ‘Big Bang’ scenario equally. However, scientists are, and will no doubt remain for the foreseeable future, extremely reluctant to even consider the possibility of a supernatural source and origin to our universe, simply because it is beyond our ability to measure or demonstrate empirically.

We may suppose, further, that what we call *spacetime* is a correlate of light and its innate proclivity for very rapidly spreading itself in all directions. Where there is extension, there is *space*; where there is a sequence of events, there is *time*. And while time and space are relative to the speed of light, light itself, the primary ‘stuff’ of the universe, is the sole constant by which time and space are measured. Like Einstein, we can describe and measure it, but, since it seems to lie outside the parameters of nature, we struggle unsuccessfully to know and understand just what it is.

Now, if it was a sudden pulse of Divinely-produced Energy that created the universe, it would have to have been a tremendous amount of Energy. We know this because of Einstein’s formula which declares that the amount of initiating Energy that would account for all the mass in the universe would have to have been the product of all the mass in the universe times the speed of light squared. I don’t know how much mass the universe contains, but you would have to multiply that figure by 448, 900, 000,000,000, 000 (the speed of light squared in mph) to get the amount of Energy required to produce it. It is easy to see that it would have to have been quite a burst of Energy!

If a thousand suns appeared simultaneously in the sky, their light
might dimly resemble the [radiant] splendor of that Omnific Being! ⁶

Such an immense burst of electromagnetic energy would no doubt follow the same progressive development as that suggested by the physicists who advocate a

‘natural’ (i.e., material) origin of the universe: In the first moments, the Energy-Matter and Matter-Energy transformations would alternate in rapid flux.

Expanding at the speed of light, some of that Energy would be converted to particle-antiparticle pairs, most of which would annihilate, and some of the remaining matter in the form of quarks, along with their interacting gluons (what is called a *quark-gluon plasma*),⁷ would eventually combine to form protons and neutrons; other particles, the free electrons, would inevitably bond to the protons, forming the element, hydrogen.

These hydrogen atoms would collect in the form of a gas; and this gas, reaching a large enough volume, would be affected by a gravitational force (that Einstein says is a function of the geometry of spacetime), which, in turn, would draw such gas nebulae into a density great enough to initiate nuclear fusion; and thus stars, and whole galaxies of stars would be born. In the interior furnaces of these stars, heavier elements would be created; and when the cores of the stars would collapse, they would explode into space; and their remnants would form into a second generation of stars, like our sun and its satellite planets. And, of course, it would all have begun with a great burst of light from a numinous source!

Is such a scenario possible? Or plausible? Does this explanation fit all the available physical and mathematical data? I don’t know. I leave it for those scientifically trained experts familiar with the properties and possibilities of high-energy radiation and the intricacies of nucleosynthesis to determine. For my part, I only know for a certainty that this universe is a product of the Divine Energy of God breathed into existence by His loving grace and imbued with His Divine Consciousness.

We must ask ourselves: ‘How could such a thing as an immense and awesomely productive burst of light come to be where before there was nothing? Can a burst of light occur without a physical source?’ This same question of origination presents itself, whether it is the pure energy of light we speak of, or a super-dense entity (singularity) about to explode, or a fluctuating quantum vacuum spontaneously sprouting universes.

There could have been no *natural* cause, for there was no “nature” as yet. There could have been no material cause; for there was no “material” anything as yet. There could have been no “place” for such an event to “occur”, for there was no space as yet. There was no “when” for it to happen, for there was no time as yet. Only now we are able to place it at the beginning of time by counting back in earth

years to that beginning. In attempting to speak of the origin of time, space, and mass-energy, our very language, our calculations, become meaningless, having no reference or basis. Can something appear without a cause? Why no, of course not. But can something appear without a ‘natural’ —that is, *material*— cause? Well, it had to have, didn’t it?

The materialists hold that all forms of matter, including biological (living) matter, is the product of ‘natural’ causes, ‘natural’ processes. But what do they mean by ‘natural’? They explain that there is no need to postulate a ‘supernatural’ agency in the creation and evolution of the universe, for, they say, “It is simply the nature of light-Energy to “decay” into material particles; and it is simply the nature of those particles, such as quarks and electrons, to act under the attraction of the electromagnetic and ‘color’ charges inherent in those particles.” Further, they say, “It is simply ‘natural’ processes that account for the fact that the aggregates of particles that we call “atoms,” collect together to form the molecules that make up the various ‘elements’ of chemical, material and biological substances; and these molecules have a ‘natural’ propensity to mutate into biological tissue and to evolve by ‘natural’ means into the various life forms that populate the earth.” “In short,” they say, “the entire universe is a product of ‘natural’ material processes.”

One even hesitates to point out to such naive people that the ‘Big Bang’ or ‘Great Radiation’ from which the entire universe was produced did not spontaneously arise from *nothing* and from *nowhere*, as they so intently wish to believe. By seeing such Energy as a ‘given’ condition, as a ‘natural’ phenomenon, we are able to regard all its subsequent transformations also as ‘natural’. How easily we take it for granted that we live in a universe where Energy and Matter are interconvertible! And by seeing that condition as ‘natural’, we fail to see how extraordinary and *supernatural* it truly is.

It is by labeling the manifestation of that initial supernatural Energy as ‘natural’, that the rationalizers of materialism justify their simplistic and utterly false view of all existence. The manifestation of that initial Energy is indeed ‘natural’—for a supernatural Creative Power. The transformation of that initial light-Energy into material particles is indeed ‘natural’—for a supernatural Essence imbued with a universal Intelligence. The attractive and repulsive forces inherent in the particles causing them to cluster into atoms is indeed ‘natural’—for a supernatural Essence imbued with a universal Intelligence. The spontaneous congregation and organization of clusters of atoms into molecules is indeed ‘natural’—for a supernatural Essence imbued with universal Intelligence. Given the properties of

light and of matter, all these developments are indeed ‘natural’, but mustn’t we ask, “Given by what or by whom?”⁸

The Light-Energy that emanated from God [the Divine Mind] at the moment of Creation around 14 billion years ago was, and is, a *spiritual* substance. The *material* universe which developed from it is still a *spiritual* substance, though we call it “material” due to its form, mass, and apparent substance. The differentiation between *spiritual* and *material* is imaginary, is non-existent; matter is Light-Energy, and Light-Energy is God’s breath. Nothing exists but God, whether manifest or unmanifest. All matter—all that we experience as the world about us, including ourselves—is born of God’s Divine Light. Our bodies are formed of the ‘matter’ that was produced from that Divine Light, and they consist therefore of a Divine substance. Our bodies are God’s Energy manifest in form. In the soul’s interior experience of union, it is clearly seen that all that exists in this world is God’s manifestation; and the soul cries out:

O my God, even this body is Thine own!
Though I call to Thee and seek Thee amidst chaos,
Even I, who seemed an unclean pitcher amidst Thy waters,
Even I am Thine own.⁹

From the initial ‘Great Radiance’ comes all that exists as material objects and all that exists as active forces in the universe today and for all time. Every exploding star, every movement of gaseous nebulae far-off in space, every object and every motion—including the blinking of your eye, has its source and origin in that initial burst of light. According to the Law of the conservation of mass-energy, the First Law of Thermodynamics, it is an undeviating quantity of Energy. According to this Law: ‘the sum of the mass-energy within a closed system (like the universe) remains constant’. In other words, the total initial Energy of which all material forms and all manifestations of energy in the universe are constituted, remains always the same total. It means that all that we do and perceive, including our own bodies and its movement, is made of that initial Light, and is nothing else but that original Light produced by and consisting of the Divine breath of God.

It is of paramount importance that you understand that this body in which you exist is made of God’s Light. Every atom of your body originated as a photon of His eternal Light. The body’s form will not last, of course; it will decompose and turn to ash or dust, but it will always remain God’s Light, regardless of the form it takes. Eventually, that Light that forms this universe will return to its original state

in God; but even while it continues to form an element of this ever-changing world, it is still God's imperishable Light. The vast array of stars and galaxies and clusters of galaxies—all are His. And don't forget that the Light of conscious awareness within you—that too is His, all His.

At every moment of your existence—from birth to final breath—you are in God, composed of God, enveloped in God. How could you ever be apart from Him? How could you ever be anywhere but safe in His infinitely blissful bosom? Give praise to God!

* * *

NOTES:

1. Today, however, there are serious doubts among some in the scientific community that a singularity is even a possibility. See “Researchers Show That Black Holes Do Not Exist”, by Thania Benios; in PhysOrg Newsletter for September 24, 2014: <http://phys.org/news/2014-09-black-holes.html>.
2. Arthur Zajonc, *Catching The Light*, N.Y., Bantam Books, 1993; p. 256.
3. *Ibid.*, p. ix.
4. from JPL/NASA ([news:web](http://news.web)), reported in *Physorg Newsletter* at www.physorg.com/news175961092 appearing on 10/28/09.
5. The concept in physics that every particle has an antiparticle with an opposite charge is called “particle symmetry”; and there are also several speculative theories to account for the breaking of this symmetry in the early universe. It is interesting to note that this idea of opposite but symmetrical pairs is reminiscent of (and possibly related to) the duality experienced in mystical vision whereby all relative states of consciousness are composed of opposites, such as love/hate, ahead/behind, life/death, joy/sorrow, I/Thou, etc. All relative states of consciousness are seen to be composed of these opposites; yet in the mystical experience of Unity, there is a conjunction, or ‘marriage’ of all opposites in the revealed unity of the absolute Consciousness, which transcends (though it is the source of) all relative conscious states.

6. *Bhagavad Gita*, XI.12; Paramahansa Yogananda, *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita*, Los Angeles, Self-Realization Fellowship, 1995; vol. II, p. 818.

7. This quark-gluon plasma (QGP), theorized to have been produced in the first few microseconds of the ‘Big Bang’, was recently reproduced at the Brookhaven National Laboratory by colliding gold ions at nearly the speed of light in their Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider, a 2.4 mile-circumference “atom smasher”, thereby creating a “liquid matter” (QGP) at a temperature of “about 4 trillion degrees Celsius”—about 250,000 times hotter than the center of the Sun. (from Brookhaven National Laboratory, reported by Physorg Newsletter, February 15, 2010; www.physorg.com).

8. All this universe, the "scientists" say, is just the result of natural laws. And I would ask them, 'Who instituted those natural laws at the moment *nature* was created?' I say, 'They were instituted by the divine Mind that produced the ‘Great Radiance.’ In return, these scientists ask, 'How could a Mind—even a divine Mind—produce the amount of gamma radiation required to transform into an entire universe of material wave-particles? How, for that matter, could It produce Light at all?' I do not have the answer to that, but I would ask in return, 'How does your own limited mind produce thoughts and images within itself? Do you think you know? How does your mind produce the actions of your body simply by the power of will? Do you know? Your mind and your body are products of that universal Mind. Who can know *how* It does all that It does?'

9. From Swami Abhayananda, “The Song of The Self”, in *The Supreme Self*, Fallsburg, N.Y., Atma Books, 1984.

* * *

3. From Light To Universe (10-25-2016)

Cosmologists and astrophysicists tell us that the temperature of the Cosmic Background Radiation (CBR) throughout the universe is currently 2.7 degrees Kelvin. Extrapolating from that current temperature allows scientists to roll back the clock to surmise the temperature of the universe at the moment it originated—what we refer to as the Big Bang, or Great Radiance. No one was there to see the moment the universe originated, but, from the evidence provided by the Cosmic Background Radiation that remains today, it is surmised that the universe began as a great burst of Light, sometimes referred to as “the primeval fireball” for lack of a better term. No one knows just what this primeval fireball was like—except that it consisted primarily of photons (particles of high-frequency electromagnetic radiation), that it was very hot (more than 10^{12} degrees Kelvin), and that it was rapidly expanding and cooling to become the material universe we know today.

Now, putting aside for a moment, the question of where such a great burst of Light may have come from, most people are easily able to imagine that the origin of the universe appeared as a great Light in the form of a “primeval fireball”. Such a “fireball” is quite easy to imagine; but few, it seems to me, understand the process by which that Light, that high-frequency radiation, *became* the material objects of our world. This process, though understood by so few, is really easy to understand once it is explained. And once it is understood, you will have the key to comprehending the formation of our entire universe of forms.

Here is how it is explained by distinguished professor of Astronomy, Michael Zeilik, in his widely used college textbook, *Astronomy: The Evolving Universe*:

At some time in the primeval fireball, the energy of photons was so high that their collisions produced particles. This process occurs when the energy in the colliding photons equals or exceeds the mass of the particles produced. Sounds bizarre?

The result comes directly from Einstein’s relation between matter and energy ($E=mc^2$). It does not restrict the *direction* of the transformation: matter can become energy, or energy can become matter.¹

So, given a couple of colliding photons with enough energy, they can easily produce a particle of matter or antimatter². It is not magic; but it is nevertheless

amazing: Photons (packets of Light), by colliding with one another, spontaneously transform into particles of matter or antimatter.³ Photons of electromagnetic radiation at a frequency in the gamma range such as existed in great density in the first moments of the Big Bang had sufficient energy to transform into matter or antimatter particles simply by running into each other. In countless such collisions, the photons were mutually annihilated, and, in their place, was a proton, or neutron, or electron, depending on the volume of energy they contained. In the early maelstrom of high-frequency radiation at the time of the universe's creation, there was a continual transformation back and forth, from energy (photons) to matter (elementary particles) and from matter back again to energy, as the photonic collisions continued. But as the universe expanded, and the temperature of its contents cooled, the radiation and the matter became stabilized and compartmentalized as separate and continuous states: matter and energy—disguising the fact that matter and energy consist of but one common and identical Light.

The universe wasn't made in a day, or even seven days; but there were several distinct stages in the production of the material of our phenomenal universe: Professor Zeilik divides the production of matter/antimatter in the early universe into four eras: a **heavy-particle era**, a **light-particle era**, a **radiation era**, and a **matter era**. The earliest period, the **heavy-particle era**, is that period when the temperature of the universe was greater than 10^{12} degrees Kelvin, and the production of massive particles and antiparticles dominated. The **light-particle era** was when the temperature had reduced to around 10^{12} degrees Kelvin, and particles of lighter mass (such as electrons, and neutrinos) were produced. The **radiation era** occurred when the temperature dropped to the point where the photons no longer had the energy to create new particles. Radiation was then the main form of energy. The **matter era** is the era in which we now live, when the energy of matter (as the amount of mass, in a cubic meter of space) is about a thousand times greater than that of radiation.

So, all matter (and antimatter as well) that forms our current universe came from that original high-frequency light—is, in fact, that light itself in a transformed state! And this brings us back to the consideration of the question, “Where did that originating Light come from?” But you probably already know the answer to that question. And you probably also know that, since that Light was produced by and lives within the Divine Consciousness, that Light contains the animating power and life-giving Consciousness of its all-powerful Source, to whom belongs all praise now and forevermore.

NOTES:

1. Michael Zeilik, *Astronomy: The Evolving Universe*, 9th edition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002; p.471.
2. Antimatter has the same properties as regular matter except that it has the opposite electrical charge. When a particle of matter and a particle of antimatter collide, they annihilate, and in their place is an equivalent amount of energy in the form of a photon. From light to matter; from matter to light.
3. If there is magic, it is in the originating Light that can appear now as energy, now as matter. This is the secret of creation; this is how everything in the universe, including our own bodies, was created from the great Light.

* * *

4. How God Made The World ¹ (6-7-2013)

Existence

The ‘creation’ of the world appears to have been accomplished by a great bursting forth of God’s essence—which we call “light”—occurring around fourteen billion years ago. There is abundant scientific evidence to suggest that an immense field of high-frequency light suddenly appeared and transformed itself into particulate entities which combined to constitute the many observable forms that make up our world. Over time, stars, planets, oceans formed, allowing for the eventual accommodation of God’s life and consciousness in every field and stream. In short, God produced a world of form from Himself; and since it is contained within Himself, every particle of it is inhabited by His Consciousness. Clearly, He is all, and all is He.

When we speak of God, we must understand that we are speaking of an infinite, eternal, and omnipotent Mind. It follows therefore that whatever is manifested by Him—i.e., ‘the Great Radiance’ and the ensuing ‘material’ universe, including ourselves—is necessarily a *mental* creation, existing only as an imagination within that Divine Mind. In other words, this universe and all within it is a figment of God’s imagination. He is the only one who really is; and all these forms and all these “I’s” exist within that one infinite Mind, and for that reason are permeated by Him—just as our own thought-forms are permeated by our own conscious minds in which those thought-forms are created and exist.

A personage in a dream is not only permeated with the consciousness of the dreamer, he is *made of* the consciousness of the dreamer. He is essentially *identical* with the consciousness of the dreamer. In just the same way, we are not only permeated by God’s Consciousness, we are *made of* His essence; we are projections of His light. And our consciousness is essentially identical with the Consciousness of God. When we look deeply within ourselves, we discover that we are manifestations of the one Mind, and essentially identical to the one Mind. For, just as a dream-person looking within to inquire who he is would discover that he is in fact the dreamer, so do we, inquiring within, discover that we are the limitless Mind in whom all things and all beings exist.

‘But how,’ we might wonder, ‘could an entire universe that appears so substantial and physical be a mere imagination, a Mind-born projection of

Thought?’ And the answer might be found in the recent results of science’s continuing investigation into the nature of matter. The science of physics, for all its denial of the supernatural reality, has done more in the last one hundred years to dispel the notion of the substantiality of the material world than all the theologians throughout history. During that time, the discoveries of physicists have reminded us of the declarations of the Upanishads that the appearance of matter, i.e., the phenomenal universe, is an illusion, a product of Maya, the creative power of the One (*Brahman*). Contemporary science has shown that the universe does indeed consist of an Energy that transforms into material particles; but these material particles are really nothing more than submicroscopic electromagnetic impulses, mere ‘points of Energy’, interacting in such a way that the appearance of substance is produced—forming, in other words, an illusory world.

How do these “points” or “fields” of Energy, these so-called ‘wave-particles’ that began as “photons” of light, manage to produce the illusion of form and substance? In the hot, dense environment in which they began, the intensely energetic photons of which that initial radiation consisted spontaneously transformed into particles such as quarks and electrons—which combined to form protons and neutrons—which combined to form atoms; and the atoms combined to form molecules, which combined in vast numbers to form perceptible gases, liquids, and solids in a variety of sizes and configurations.²

The elementary ‘particles’ themselves are unimaginably tiny: according to the physicists of the Large Hadron Collider at CERN, “protons are 100,000 times smaller than the simplest atom, hydrogen; and quarks are 10,000 times smaller than protons. For comparison, if a hydrogen atom were six miles across, a quark would still measure less than four-thousandths of an inch.”³

Clearly, the atoms of which all perceivable gases, liquids, and solids consist are mostly empty space in their interior. In fact, physicists tell us that all of what we call *Matter* is 99.999999999999 percent empty space; the other infinitesimal part seems to be nothing more than energy wavelets and intangible forces. Subatomic wave-particles consist of intangible electromagnetically charged impulses held in proximate “orbits” about one another by invisible forces to form the appearance of much grander substantial entities. And these appearances are multiplied in infinite profusion and variety as if by some magician’s hand, to appear before our eyes as a multitudinous world of objects.

And so, this ‘material’ world, this phenomenal reality of ours, is a marvelous magic show of truly immense proportions!

This Light, these particles and forces—what a marvelous universe they make! How real it all seems! A great burst of Light, and all congeals into a universe of form and color, intelligence and emotion, *sturm und drang*. Time drags the whole process out, making it all seem quite natural, making it seem, from the perspectives of our individual lives, a long and gradual evolution. But, from God’s eternal perspective, His Mind-born creation is accomplished in its fullness in an instant.

Is this Light-energy by which God forms the universe simply the substance of His Thought—or what is analogous to Thought in a Divine Mind? Who can say? We have identified a whole array of different ‘wave-particles’ that make up the material world, but that does not mean that these constituent entities are really separate substantial ‘things’ in themselves. We have simply given names to the common impulses and forces inherent in God’s Light-illusion, as one might examine and give names to the cohesive thought-constituents within a dream. This world-appearance does indeed seem substantial; but it is God’s illusion—as the light-circle produced by a whirling flame is an illusion.

In the aggregate of trillions of these illusory wave-particles, a vast, complex, visual illusion is produced—which, by reflecting millions of photons onto our retinas, produces electrical impulses in our brains, which in turn produces an image to our conscious minds; while the gentle forces produced by the motion of electrons presents a tactile sensation in another section of our brains, and is interpreted in our minds as the sensation of touch, confirming our impression of substantial form. But it is only a marvelous masquerade of light—God’s light; and it is all His grand illusion.

Consciousness.

Now, let us discuss consciousness. Over three thousand years ago, sages of Egypt and Israel proclaimed that life and consciousness was inspired or otherwise instilled into man by God; and that this ‘breath’ or ‘spark’ of God’s Consciousness constituted one’s “soul”. Some others, like Plato and Plotinus, thought that God’s conscious “Soul” was not infused exclusively into man, but into the entire universe, guiding and regulating every aspect of it from within. To this day, these age-old concepts constitute the framework of our theology and

the imagery of our religious imagination. Our minds continue even now to operate in these established patterns, utilizing these ancient conceptualizations, to which we have become habituated for so long.

But, as we have already suggested, there is another, perhaps more accurate, way of viewing the permeation of man and matter by God's conscious Spirit: not by seeing it as an "infusion" or "inspiration", but rather as the 'containment' of the phenomenal universe within the one Mind. Consider how our own individual human consciousness permeates our thoughts and dream-images. Our thoughts and mental images are permeated by our consciousness because these thoughts and images are contained *within* our conscious minds. May we not conclude that, likewise, the Consciousness of God, the Divine Mind, permeates the universe because the universe is contained *within* God? After all, where else would a Divine Mind's creations exist but *within* Himself? ⁴

There is one Consciousness. It is the Consciousness of the One Mind. And every object in this phenomenal universe exists within that one conscious Mind, is constituted of that Mind, and partakes of that one Consciousness to the degree that it is capable. The various objects of this manifest universe move and operate, not by individual forces or laws of physics, but in and by that One.⁵ When the individual mind becomes illumined by that Consciousness, and is one with it, it is able to see that: "all things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain." Who, then, is doing what? In Him we live and move. In Him one Will operates throughout. And we, mere dust motes dancing in His sunbeam, are swallowed and encompassed in His light.

The Divine Mind, which is the source of Consciousness, is beyond time and space, and all manifestation; It is the eternal Identity of all that exists. It transcends the universe, while constituting its essence—as a dreaming mind transcends its dream-images, while constituting their essence. Consciousness is not the property of matter, or of any individual being. It is not produced by any material process; but rather is a Divine stream of Intelligence filling the entire universe. It is the fundamental nature of Being, the foundation of the phenomenal universe, and the light of awareness filling it.

By following our own consciousness back to its Source, we are able to discover the one Self.⁶ That Self is God. He is the one Source of the material universe and He is the life and awareness pervading it. But, of

course, we must come to know Him for ourselves. Our soul/mind must be illumined by the eternal Light itself and drawn into Its hidden depths. We do not come to know God through arguments and proofs, but by His grace. And though we may associate grace with this or that religion, it is universal and originates in God. To obtain that grace, all men focus their minds on Him through prayer and contemplative longing, and He shines His Light on whom He will. Those who have received that grace, realize beyond all doubt that their bodies are His light-forms, and that they are animated and made conscious by the all-pervading presence of His living Consciousness.

The personal consciousness that we regard as our “soul” derives its existence and its inherent bliss from the Consciousness of the Divine Mind in whom it exists. But souls *do* have a semblance of individual existence. While the Divine Mind, the Self, is universal and without characteristics of Its own, It manifests as a multitude of individual psyches, or souls. Each of these individual souls possesses its own unique characteristics and evolves from birth to birth toward the knowledge and awareness of its one true eternal Identity. The individual soul is therefore a pretended, or imagined, identity of the Self, whose only actual and realizable Identity is the one indivisible Mind.

Each individual soul is confined to a body that defines the extent of its individual being in the spatio-temporal universe. We regard what is not within that limitation as “outside” of us and “other” than us. But God has no body or any limit to His extent. There is no “outside” of Him; no “other”. Even if He were to create an outside, it would be within Him. God is an infinite, eternal Mind; He transcends space and time. Space and time are His creations, and they exist within Him. *Whatever* He creates is within Him. We, and the entire universe, exist within Him. Our own minds are limited; each one has its own perspective and considers itself to be the “subject”; and what is external to it is regarded as the “object”. But in God’s divine Consciousness, subject and object are one. He is unlimited and undivided. His Consciousness pervades everything and everyone.

We must understand that the separation of body and soul, of Matter and Spirit, exists only in the temporal world of appearance. In the Eternal (the Divine Mind), this duality, this separation, does not exist. In the Divine Mind, they are indistinguishable. Like water and ice in a glass, they are separable in appearance though they are one in essence. Those who have ‘seen’ into their own eternal reality have realized that their body and soul, their consciousness

and their form, are one living reality in God. The mystic, therefore, while experiencing his identification with the Divine Mind, experiences himself, not simply as Soul, but as an illimitable awareness that is *both* universal Soul *and* universal Energy/Matter. In the Divine Mind, the unmanifest Light and the manifested Light together form all that is. Ultimately, they are one, as they both derive from the same One, and are resolved in the same One.

We are made of the Consciousness and Energy of God. His Consciousness manifests as our conscious soul, and His Energy is sent forth as light to establish the material universe at the 'Big Bang', 'Big Burst', 'Great Radiance', or whatever you wish to call it. And the ultimately true Origin, Source, and Father of that field of Consciousness and Energy, is the One. All that exists is His. It is His projection, His exuberant radiance. Nothing else exists but that One. Our sense of 'I' too is Him. 'I' am the one and only 'I' that is. My consciousness is His consciousness. My body, as well as the whole universe, is His manifest form. I am in Him and He is in me. I and the Father are one.

If you ask a beam of sunlight, "Who are you?" it will answer, "I am the Sun." If you ask a wave on the sea, "Who are you?" it will answer, "I am the ocean." If you ask a soul, "Who are you?" it must answer, "I am the One in all. I am He who alone exists now and forever. I am the light of the one Sun; I am a wave on the one Sea; I am a living breath of the one Life. I am in all that is seen or unseen. I am the One in all."

Jesus said, "I am the Light that is over all things. I am all: From me all has come forth, and to me all returns. Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."⁷

Unfortunately, there are many who believe that this is a truth that applies only to one unique historical figure; but it is a *universal truth*, a truth for all, and a truth to be realized: *I* am not merely this body, not just this spark of consciousness, nor merely the entire manifested universe; I am the Source of the universe, and the universe itself. I am both the subject and the object. There is nothing else here but I AM. Listen to what the great Shankaracharya said:

The fool thinks, 'I am the body'. The intelligent man thinks, 'I am an individual soul united with the body'. But the wise man, in the greatness of his knowledge and spiritual discrimination, sees the Self as [the only] reality, and thinks, 'I am Brahman'.⁸

I am that Brahman, one without a second, the ground of all existences. I make all things manifest. I give form to all things. I am within all things, yet nothing can taint me. I am eternal, pure, unchangeable, absolute.

I am that Brahman, one without a second. Maya, the many-seeming, is merged in me. I am beyond the grasp of thought, the essence of all things. I am the truth. I am knowledge. I am infinite. I am absolute bliss.

I am beyond action; [I am] the reality which cannot change. I have neither part nor form. I am absolute. I am eternal. Nothing sustains me, I stand alone. I am one without a second.

I am the soul of the universe. I am all things, and above all things. I am one without a second. I am pure consciousness, single and universal. I am joy. I am life everlasting.⁹

You and I—we are alive in God. Become awake and sense Him—within you, around you, constituting your body and your awareness, the earth, the heavens. This ocean of existence is His. Nothing exists outside of God. To know God is to know your Self. It is to know the originating Mind of the Father, the One. It is to know the Source of all existence, the Source of all consciousness, and the Source of all bliss. What will you do with this knowledge? Praise Him in your thoughts, and in your words and in your actions. Find your delight in Him—seeing only Him, loving only Him, praising only Him.

God, being so close, is easily accessible to us;
He is always within the reach of our call,
Always ready to provide succor in our need,
And the light of wisdom in our times of darkness.
Our own soul is the conduit of this accessibility,
This communication, this succor and this wisdom.

In our own soul, when the chattering of the mind is silenced,
And all our attention is focused on His presence,
There He is found in the very qualities of the soul;
For we are rays from His brilliance,
Diminished only by our unwillingness
To manifest His light.

He is the air in our nostrils and the earth under our feet.
 He is the light of our eyes and the music in our breast.
 He is the bright awareness that lives as you,
 And He is the storied tale your living tells.
 You dance in His firelight; you float on His sea.
 You breathe by His breathing; you move by His joy.

No matter how far you may gaze into the rolling
 Galaxies cascading above;
 No matter what dark or clownish scenes you dream,
 Or terrestrial landscapes you cross;
 In the depths of the ocean, or on the chilly
 Snow-peaked mountains;
 And even in the abyss of death and darkness,
 You are ever within His close embrace.

You cannot leave Him, nor scamper from His sight.
 For you are in Him as a fish is in the ocean
 Or a bird is in the sky.
 His love surrounds and holds you,
 And He sees all through your eyes.

Bliss

There is one spiritual issue on which science, secular society, and the various religious traditions all agree: the freedom and accountability of the human will. The ancient Jews were keenly aware of the fact that it was man's free will that allowed for the disobedience of God's will, as illustrated in their Biblical 'garden of Eden' story. Later, Christians declared that God sacrificed His own son on the cross to redeem 'believers' from that earlier 'Fall from grace'. Other spiritual teachers, such as the Buddha, Shankara and Plotinus, also postulate the human 'will to separateness' as the instigator of human suffering. Here, for example, is Plotinus' take on man's Fall:

What can it be that has brought the souls to forget the Father, God,
 and, though [they are] members of the Divine and entirely of that
 world, to ignore at once themselves and It? The evil that has
 overtaken them has its source in self-will, in the entry into the

sphere of process, and in the primal differentiation with the desire for self-ownership. They conceived a pleasure in this freedom and largely indulged their own motion. Thus, they were hurried down the wrong path, and in the end, drifting further and further, they came to lose even the thought of their origin in the Divine.¹⁰

The Jews, Christians, the Buddha, Shankara, Plotinus—all put the blame for human suffering upon the separative will of the individual. And rightly so, no doubt; for in the Divine Itself, there is no suffering. Had the One no hand, then, in the creation of the defiant soul? Must we not wonder if anything at all comes to pass that is not of His doing? The soul's ability to will freely—had He no hand in that? May it not be that our embodied existence in this spatio-temporal world is also His doing? Is it not possible that this going forth into the school of separate existence is, as the Vedantists assert, His play or sport? And is it not possible that we are sent forth into this material school to prove and improve, to be tested and to evolve in His knowledge, in His joy? It is indeed we who create suffering through ignorance and error; but it is He who comprises the essence of this soul with its capacity for willing, and it is He who fashioned this universal school for the soul's correcting. Can we imagine that He was ignorant of the outcome?

We are but waves on His infinite ocean; and while the wave's suffering of separation from the ocean might seem real enough to the wave, it is actually based on illusion. Once the wave realizes its true nature, all suffering disappears. We are in a similar situation: unknowing, we suffer; knowing, we rejoice. It is not existence that constitutes suffering, but existence in delusion. When we awake to our Divine existence, all suffering vanishes. Is this not the message of all who have seen the truth?

All creatures, down to the smallest microbes, and up to the great apes, have the power of will; but only the creature known as man has the ability to know his Source and Ground as Spirit, and strive to overcome his merely fleshly impulses. Is that circumstance only accidental, or is there a purposeful evolution at work here? Man is the culmination of God's purposes; and only he is able to find within himself the eternal One. It's true that, in following his own appetites and cravings, man brings himself to know suffering; but, even though the expanse presented before him is broad and vast and his opportunities many, experience leads him inexorably to wisdom; the Divine in him leads him eventually to Itself. The soul, being of Divine lineage, cannot

long refuse the lure and fragrance of its homeland. By its own power, or rather by the power of the Divine in it, the soul stirs and awakes in its proper time, follows the trail of bliss leading it home, and at last is illumined by the inner light of God to know the One in whom it lives, and from whom it has never been separated.

The separate identity you thought was your own, the body and soul you thought was yours, is in fact God's. There is no yours. That illusory separate identity, or individual ego, common to all embodied souls, is an extremely subtle and deceptive mirage. It masks the nondual reality, and it is dispelled only by the grace of God. This ego is a veil blinding us to and separating us from the awareness of our true Self, our Godhood; and it is a veil only He, the Divine Mind, can lift.

What *is* this ego that stands to block our view of eternity? How impossible it is to comprehend! It can't be grasped or dispelled or even held up to the light of knowledge. It seems that it is an imposed ignorance that automatically accompanies embodiment. In effect, it is our Lord who casts this dust in our eyes, blinding us to our true eternal Self; and He alone has the power to dispel it. No matter how we try to escape the ego's limiting perspective, we are steadfastly caught in its grip. It separates us out from our limitless being, squeezing us into a narrow individuality, hiding from us God's face and our own divinity in Him. We can only raise our eyes to Him in love and longing, praying that He will soon return us home once again to His all-inclusive awareness.

God's grace cannot be earned or deserved. It is freely given and may descend upon you at any time. It is experienced as an awakening to the Divine presence in yourself and in the world, and it fills your heart with a new love and joy, stirring your mind to a new understanding of the spiritual nature of life. When God's grace awakens you, your mind begins to turn gratefully to God, and a physical pleasure, like a chill rising up the spine, occasionally reminds you of His inward presence. In your desire to draw nearer to God in worshipful devotion, you spend long hours in contemplation and prayer. And in the moment when you become completely surrendered in silence to that Divine presence, He may lift from your mind the veil of separation and reveal that you and He are one. In that moment you will know the reality of God's immediate and all-embracing presence, the untranslatable, inconceivable, gladness of unlimited being that requires no explanation, no concepts, no theories, but

clearly and self- evidently *is*. And you will live the rest of your life in the blissful awareness of the Truth.

Knowledge

When He reveals Himself in you, you will know that ‘He’ alone is, that ‘you’ are but one of His forms; and you will declare:

O my God, even this body is Thine own!
 Though I call to Thee and seek Thee amidst chaos,
 Even I who seemed an unclean pitcher amidst Thy waters —
 Even I am Thine own.

It will be immediately and abundantly clear to you that you are to God as a wave is to the ocean, as the mountains and the valleys are to the earth, as a pebble is to stone:

Does a wave cease to be of the ocean?
 Do the mountains and the gulfs cease to be of the earth?
 Or does a pebble cease to be stone?
 How can I escape Thee?
 Thou art even That which thinks of escape!

When He reveals Himself, the semblance of a separate identity vanishes in the One who alone is.

Even now, I speak the word, “Thou”, and create duality;
 I love, and create hatred;
 I am in peace, and am fashioning chaos;
 Standing on the peak, I necessitate the depths.

All such dualities are but mind-creations, each invention bringing into existence its opposite as well. These dualities exist only in His Mind-creation; when He merges your mind in His, all dualities are dissolved in His oneness. And you will know:

But now weeping and laughing are gone;
 Night is become day;
 Music and silence are heard as one;

My ears are all the universe.

All motion has ceased; everything continues.
 Life and death no longer stand apart.
 No I, no Thou; no now, or then.
 Unless I move, there is no stillness.

This is the Mind of God. Your separate mind is merged into His.

Nothing to lament, nothing to vanquish,
 Nothing to pride oneself on;
 All is accomplished in an instant.
 All may now be told without effort.
 Where is there a question?
 Where is the temple?
 Which the Imperishable, which the abode?

Here, the distinction between the imperishable Spirit and the bodily abode no longer exists. There is no separation here; in God there is only the One, the all. He is life. He is the source of joy, and He is also the source of our unknowing.

I am the pulse of the turtle;
 I am the clanging bells of joy.
 I bring the dust of blindness;
 I am the fire of song.
 I am in the clouds and in the gritty soil;
 In pools of clear water my image is found.

Look at your reflection! Is it not an image of God's manifest glory?

I am the dust on the feet of the wretched,
 The toothless beggars of every land.
 I have given sweets that decay to those that crave them;
 I have given my wealth unto the poor and lonely.
 My hands are open — nothing is concealed.

See how we chase after the things of the world that only crumble eventually to dust in our hands, while turning our backs on all that is eternal sweetness and light. The choice is ours, and ours alone.

All things move together of one accord;
 Assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.
 The Sun stirs the waters of my heart,
 And the vapor of my love flies to the four corners of the world;
 The moon stills me, and the cold darkness is my bed.

Perfect justice permeates all in a perfect unfolding, in a perfect rhythm; and every ending is followed by a new beginning.

I have but breathed, and everything is rearranged
 And set in order once again.
 A million worlds begin and end in every breath,
 And in this breathing, all things are sustained.

* * *

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. This article is a condensation or capsulization of my book, *Body And Soul: An Integral Perspective (Third Edition)*, currently available on amazon's Kindle.
2. The question, 'How did God create the universe?' is one that is unanswerable. But, the most plausible theory, suggested by an enormous amount of evidence—that God produced from within Himself a great Light (an electromagnetic field) potentially containing all material forms and their evolutes—is here offered as the most probable beginning to the history of the universe:

Light is a unique form of energy, neither wave nor particle, though it can appear in either guise. It is not a substance, but an intangible and indefinable *essence* that some have likened to a mental rather than a physical reality; and yet all that we perceive as the physical, 'material' world is made of it. This 'stuff' called *light* is miraculously endowed with the ability to transform itself into what we call 'material' particles; and, even though we can describe and predict this transformation, it is clearly an *a priori* capability that can only be described as "miraculous". We may justly say, therefore, that this Light, which contains the

potentiality of all forms, is God's creative power, the substance of His imagination—though scientists prefer to call it, 'the electromagnetic spectrum'.

This great Light, or electromagnetic field, became the universe of form in a quite amazing and miraculous fashion: The sudden burst of what we call electromagnetic energy from the Mind of God nearly 140 million centuries ago was a roiling, boiling maelstrom of light and heat, which some later referred to as 'the Big Bang'. Though it was solely God's Light, it would have appeared as an immense ball of fire, fiercely intense as it transformed into material particles for the building of a universe.

Physicists describe this "Big Bang" as an immense burst of Light in which an inconceivably dense and intensely energetic swarm of light-particles (photons) danced in close proximity and incessant flux, colliding with each other, producing particles and antiparticles in pairs, which then, themselves colliding, annihilated back into high frequency electromagnetic radiation, and then back to particle-antiparticle pairs again, in rapid succession.

Such Energy-to-Matter and Matter-to-Energy transformations would have alternated in rapid flux in those first moments. Expanding at the speed of light, some of that Energy would have been converted to particle-antiparticle pairs, most of which would have been annihilated, and some of the remaining matter in the form of quarks, along with their interacting gluons (what is called a *quark-gluon plasma*), would have eventually combined to form protons and neutrons. This quark-gluon plasma (QGP), theorized to have been produced in the first few microseconds of the 'Big Bang', was recently reproduced at the Brookhaven National Laboratory by colliding gold ions at nearly the speed of light in their Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider, a 2.4 mile-circumference "atom smasher", thereby creating a "liquid matter" (QGP) at a temperature of "about 4 trillion degrees Celsius"—about 250,000 times hotter than the center of the Sun. (from Brookhaven National Laboratory, reported by Physorg Newsletter, February 15, 2010; www.physorg.com.)

It is asserted by physicists and cosmologists that the production of particle-antiparticle pairs by the initial high-frequency radiation (which we call gamma radiation) occurred in the first few seconds at temperatures in excess of 10^{12} K (a trillion degrees Kelvin). This is regarded as the 'heavy- particle era', during which particles such as protons and antiprotons were created. Shortly thereafter, the universe entered the 'light particle era'. As the temperature of the early

universe decreased along with the energy of the photons, the rapidly spreading photons were no longer capable of converting to heavy particles like protons and neutrons but were capable of producing only lighter particles such as electron-positron pairs.

The highest frequency radiation, Gamma radiation, is radiation that reaches a frequency of 10 exahertz, or 10^{19} Hz, with a wavelength less than 10 picometers, and energies from 400 GeV (billion electron volts) to 10 TeV (trillion electron Volts). Since energy and mass are interconvertible ($E=mc^2$), energy converts to mass, and mass converts to energy. In that immense “fireball” at the beginning of time, trillions upon trillions of photons of gamma radiation collided, and each of these photons converted to a particle-antiparticle pair. So long as the energy of the photon is equal to or exceeds the mass of the particles produced, this conversion occurs. The reverse process also occurred: for example, the mass of an electron-positron pair equals 1.02 MeV (million electron volts); when such a pair collides, it is annihilated, and in its place are two photons of at least 0.51 MeV each.

When highly energetic photons collide, they convert to matter, becoming a particle-antiparticle pair, such as a proton and an antiproton, or an electron and a positron. These two members of a symmetrical pair possess opposite electric charges, and annihilate upon contact, turning back once again to light (photons). One would expect that, this being the case, every matter-antimatter pair would have annihilated over the course of time, and that consequently there would be no material universe. However, there *is* a material universe. And so, we must assume there was an asymmetry that found its way into this process, sparing approximately one matter particle in every 10 billion produced, which matter particles now constitute what is our material universe. Why and how this asymmetry should exist, however, has not yet been explained.

All of this conversion, or transformation, of Light to Matter took place within the first few moments after the initiation of “the Big Bang” or “Great Radiance”. After that, as the nascent universe expanded, the temperature (the energy of the photons) became too low to continue to produce particle-antiparticle pairs. And after about one million years, as the temperature reduced to about 3000 degrees Kelvin, the period of ‘recombination’ commenced, as the remaining nucleons (protons and neutrons) began to capture electrons to form neutral atoms, such as those of hydrogen, deuterium, and helium. (See Michael Zeilik, *Astronomy: The Evolving Universe*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, ninth edition; pp.470-475.)

These atoms of hydrogen and other gases collected in clouds; and these gas-clouds, reaching a large enough volume, were affected by the gravitational force (that Einstein says is a function of the geometry of spacetime), which, in turn, drew such gas nebulae into a density great enough to initiate nuclear fusion; and thus stars, and whole galaxies of stars were born. In the interior furnaces of these stars, heavier elements were created; and when the cores of the stars collapsed, the stars exploded into space; and their remnants formed into a second generation of stars, like our sun and its satellite planets. And, of course, all of this began with a great burst of light!

It seems likely as well, that what we call *spacetime* is a correlate of light and its innate proclivity for very rapidly spreading itself in all directions. Where there is extension, there is *space*; where there is a sequence of events, there is *time*. And while time and space are relative to the speed of light, light itself, the primary ‘stuff’ of the universe, is the sole constant by which time and space are measured. Like Einstein, we can describe and measure it, but we struggle unsuccessfully to know and understand just what it is unless we are aware that it is the very substance of God’s creative power.

3. “Large Hadron Collider could reveal our origins”, April 19, 2010 by Roger S. Boyd, copyright 2010 McClatchy-Tribune Information Services; appeared April 19, 2010 in PhysOrg Newsletter, www.physorg.com/news190869267.html.

4. That we exist in God is not a new idea. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (written circa 500 B.C.E.), the Lord, Krishna, says, “By Me, in my unmanifested form, are all things in this universe pervaded. All beings exist in Me; I do not exist in them.” (*Bhagavad Gita*: 9:4); and in the Christian scriptures, the apostle Paul says, “In Him we live and move and have our being.” (*Acts 17:28*). The entire universe exists within God. He produces the appearance of universal matter from Himself, within Himself. And while it appears that the Spirit and matter are two substances intermingled, it is all only Himself, and so He remains one Being forever. He empowers the universal appearance within Himself, and the dynamic universe continually evolves to more fully express the glory of His Being.

5. The classical ‘mechanistic’ way of conceiving the universe regarded all the things, particles, and individual beings as separate independent objects and creatures that interacted in accordance with physical ‘laws’. The illumined way of conceiving of the universe regards every particle, object, and living being as inseparably united in an

integral conscious continuum of which all particles, things, and beings are constituted. Everything that once appeared to be random (the propitious outcomes of merely blind forces)—including the *quanta* that seemed to be governed by laws of probability—is now seen to be acting in mutually harmonious accord within an interdependent whole conceived and contained within the one Mind. “All things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.”

6. The most amazing and most wonderful aspect of this new way of seeing the universe is the recognition that every individual mind is a limited version of the one Mind and is capable not only of establishing an open connection to the one Divine Mind, but of actually experiencing its identity with/as that one all-pervasive Mind.

7. Saying of Jesus, from *The Gospel of Thomas*, 77.

8. Shankaracharya, *The Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*, trans. by Swami Prabhavananda & Christopher Isherwood, Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1947; p. 58.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

10. Plotinus, *Enneads*, V.I.I: “*The Three Initial Hypostases*”.

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5. Recent Developments In Mystical Theology (from *Mystical Theology*, 2012; rev. 7-21-2017)

Over the centuries since the time of Plotinus, many others have also experienced the unitive vision of God, but our metaphysical understanding has changed very little. What *has* changed is our understanding of the origin and nature of the material world.¹ Ancient Greek thinkers found the subject too daunting, and simply accounted for the existence of the material world by positing an unoriginated sea of Chaotic matter, which the divine Thought (*Logos*, *Sophia*, *Psyche*) then permeated, bringing organization and life into it by Its power. But the last few centuries of our current era have seen a worldwide focus on the discovery of the secrets of nature, most especially through the study of *physics* and *astronomy*. In the twentieth century, Hubble's discovery that the universe is expanding led to the formulation of the concept of a definite *beginning* to our universe approximately fourteen billion years ago, and Einstein's realization that energy and matter (mass) are interconvertible gave a solid explanation for the manner in which the universe of matter came into being, and impelled science into the forefront of a rare advancement in our philosophical understanding.

Most of us, when asked, "What is matter made of?" would answer, "It is made of elementary wave-particles, such as quarks—which constitute protons and neutrons—and leptons such as electrons and neutrinos. But if we were asked, "What are these various particles made of?", we might answer, "No one knows." However, that would be incorrect. Physicists know very well that all these wave-particles are made of energy—electromagnetic energy—or more succinctly, light-energy. *All matter*, in fact, the entire universe, came from the initial burst of *Light* that we refer to as "the Big Bang".² The question of where that universe-originating light-energy came from, however, is still a controversial matter of opinion.

Clearly, there was a sudden immense burst of electromagnetic energy where prior to it there had been nothing; and that energy coalesced into the wave-particles that make up our material world. Philosophers can no longer hold to the notion of an eternal *universe*; there *was* a creation moment, and the ultimate 'stuff' of the universe is now revealed: it was light—an inconceivably large burst of high-frequency light (which we refer to as 'electromagnetic radiation')—that almost immediately began converting to material wave-particles.³ Up to the point of that empirical discovery, philosophers speculating on the origin of matter were free to

imagine many possible scenarios; but now speculation is dead. Matter is converted light; that is a proven fact. And material particles, when collided at high velocity, convert back into light (photons). Since Einstein, what previously had seemed two different things—energy and matter—were now seen to be one.

Though so much of what passes as ‘science’ today is merely the passing fashion of the moment or a speculative theory that can never be substantiated, the current understanding among scientists that all matter is an evolute of an original light is one which seems to allow of no possible future refutation. That energy and matter are interconvertible, and that the light-energy of the so-called ‘Big Bang’ of fourteen billion years ago transformed into the quarks and leptons that make up the entire world of matter is a discovery that is so incontrovertible, so uncontestable, as to effectively put an end to all future speculation as to what our world is made of.

And so, for the first time in history, after centuries of philosophical inquiry and intense scientific exploration, we now know with certainty exactly what the material world is made of. Physicists have announced it, astronomers have proclaimed it, and technicians have proven it without a doubt in their laboratories; and yet hardly anyone in the world seems to be aware of the fact that *everything is made of light*. Even those physicists who describe how the primordial photons of light transformed themselves into material particles do not seem to fully grasp the significance of the fact that *everything in the universe is made of light*.⁴

Despite the fact that scientific thinkers believe that that pristine burst of light was a ‘natural’ phenomenon (whatever that means), and spiritually oriented people are certain that the light came directly from God, the fact remains that an unimaginably immense blast of high-energy light flashed at the dawn of time in a nascent universe, and each photon of that light became a matter-antimatter pair that contributed to make the phenomenal universe of form and substance that we live in today, where *everything is made of that light*.⁵

Everyone has heard of the ‘Big Bang’, and of how all forms of energy and all material particles were produced from that initial ‘fireball’ of high-energy photons; and yet, in the minds of many, there is still the burning question: ‘Where did that abundance of light come from?’ Scientists have concluded that the light from which the world of matter is made had to have come from the explosion of an unstable super-dense chunk of matter which they call a “singularity”, while

people of religious or spiritual beliefs have understood since the most ancient of times that that light was caused by an act of God.

That the matter that constitutes this physical universe was produced by an initial high-energy burst of Light around fourteen billion years ago is accepted by the entire scientific community; the empirical evidence for this conclusion is formidable and incontestable.

Physicists and cosmologists of integrity have declared that this is as far as science can reach, that to extrapolate farther back than that would be nothing more than conjecture and supposition—certainly not science. Nonetheless, some scientists have reached beyond the empirical evidence into the realm of unfounded speculative theory and have declared that the *cause* of that burst of Light was the explosion of a submicroscopic speck of matter that existed prior to the manifestation of the universe, a speck that contained all the mass of the universe within it. And often this is declared with a straight face.

On the other hand, those who have experience of God's presence, regard science's discovery that an ancient originating Light was the source of the entire material universe to be a delightful confirmation of the Divine Creation that has been famously heralded by the wise of long ages past. It is clear, however, that neither the speculation of the theoretical scientists nor the tradition of the religions is subject to incontrovertible proof; we can only weigh the two positions and see which seems to us the more credible.

Can we really accept that a tiny rock is the ultimate creative Force from which sprang the entire vast living universe? Or perhaps the tiny rock is not the Creator, but rather the Creator, having decided to make a universe, first put the whole thing into a tiny speck, and then had it all burst forth somehow. Did *life* exist in the rock prior to its existence in the universe, or did life spontaneously arise once the rock exploded? Well, you see how difficult it would be to defend such an originating principle. But such difficulties do not arise if we assume that the same God whom we know in our hearts was also the originator and fabricator of the universe and all its living variety.

If we accept that God breathed forth or otherwise manifested an immense burst of light-energy that possesses the capacity and propensity to 'evolve' into wave-particles in time and space, constituting the elements of our universe, then why couldn't He have similarly predisposed the resulting matter to produce living bodies by a further evolutionary development? And why couldn't those first

primeval living bodies, such as bacteria and eukaryotes, be predisposed to evolve further into larger creatures, such as fish and fowl, mammals, primates, and eventually humans? ⁶ Somewhere along that chain of evolution, why couldn't consciousness and self-awareness emerge as well from the initial predisposition programmed into that divine light from the very beginning?

How could we possibly doubt that that *Light* is a miraculous energy that proceeds from the power of God? At its highest frequencies—such as that produced in its original appearance that we call ‘the Big Bang’—it has the ability to convert to electrically charged wave-particles that make up the atoms of every known or unknown substance that has existed through time, and provides the energy of every known or unknown invisible force or field of force appearing in the universe at both the microscopic and the macroscopic level. That is to say that, not only did that Light produce all the matter in the universe, but it produced the force of gravity, the so-called weak and strong forces that bind matter into cohesive entities, and all the electric and magnetic forces that exist in every wave-particle and produce so many effects on earth and beyond. These electrical charges are not only produced in every particle of matter, constituting its properties, but they also constitute every chemical reaction governing our digestion and metabolism, and every electrical impulse such as the firing of axons in our system of nerves, the firing of neurons in our brain, the beating of our heart, and the blinking of our eye. Everything—every visible or invisible thing and every perceivable or imperceptible variety of energy owes its existence to that initial Light. How can we believe, as some scientists profess to believe, that the Light, containing in its potentiality an entire universe such as this one, is the result of a random accident?

And yet, in the view of some materialistic scientists, this efficient mechanism of matter-energy interactions provides evidence that every bit of the functioning of man and the universe can be accounted for without the need to postulate a supernatural origin or underlying spiritual support. By some process of selective reasoning, they are able to ignore the question of where that light came from, how it manifested, and how it happened to distribute itself as discreet particles and electrical charges in just the proper “fine-tuned” relationships to form so inconceivably complex a cosmos of form and awareness.

Be that as it may, it is certain that any physical or metaphysical theory framed in the twenty-first century must begin with the certain premise that the origin of all matter is light—regardless of whatever one might speculate was the cause of that

burst of light. And, even if it had not been revealed to every enlightened soul that the material world is a manifestation of Divine energy, if we were to apply the rule of Ockham's razor, which suggests that we shave away unnecessary assumptions, the simplest and most obvious attributable cause of that burst of light is the Divine Creator. The assumption that the explosion of an unstable and super-dense chunk of matter (a singularity) was the cause is simply an unwarranted, irrational, and unjustified supposition.

But those of a materialist bent could scarcely be expected to concede that that Light came from a supernatural Source; they could be expected rather to fight against this notion with all the powers of their imagination. "The light resulted from the explosion of a single densely compacted speck of matter," they said; "a 'singularity'". Nevermind that it was now necessary to explain where *that* came from. For these people, that was the end of the line. Their position is reminiscent of the dismissive attitude of those people who held that the world was supported by a giant turtle, and who, when asked 'What supports the turtle?' answered, "It's turtles all the way down."

Today, it is common knowledge that all wave-particles of matter were born from the high-frequency (EM) energy released in the 'Big Bang' event of fourteen billion years ago; and that it was those wave-particles that evolved into the stars, our world, and all that we know as matter and energy. However, an important question arises: 'Did the qualities of life and consciousness exist intrinsically in the light-energy and in the wave-particles that arose from it [as many scientists believe], or was there an *infusion* or *suffusion* of a divine consciousness into that primordial matter that served to purposely organize and arrange those wave-particles toward the presently evolved state of life and consciousness that we know and experience today?' And what should we call such a principle? Anaxagorus called it "Thought"; Heraclitus, and later Philo, called it "Logos"; the author of *The Wisdom of Solomon* called it "Sophia", or "Wisdom"; Plotinus called it "Psyche", or "Soul".

No matter what word we use to denote this principle, it is necessarily a divine, consciously governing and organizing Spirit akin to the "Thought" or "Will" of God, acting in and through all the sensible universe. There are no other alternatives: for either that initial Light itself was and is purposeful, living and conscious, or that purposeful living consciousness acts within and through that light but is distinct from it. And since both light-energy and matter in its pre-organic state seem to be inert and not alive, we must assume that they are also not

conscious, nor do they intrinsically contain the seed of consciousness. It would seem, therefore, that we are forced by the evidence to conclude that an invisible living consciousness operates *within* and throughout the material universe, guiding its operations, advancing its evolution, and bringing Its own life and consciousness to light in the living creatures appearing on at least one planetary body orbiting the star we call the Sun.

Philosophers and sages from the beginning of time have declared that, in addition to the light from which all ‘things’ are made, there must be a conscious deliberate force at work in the world that functions as the organizing principle of design, and as the source of life and awareness—a conscious force which has been referred to as “spirit” or “soul”. Materialists deny that such a universal principle exists—even though by doing so, they tend to deny the existence of their own intelligence; while the mystics, seers, and all the worshipers of a transcendent-immanent God affirm the principle of a divine “soul”, and stake their lives and actions upon it, living to give expression to the Divine source within them.

That the universe began in a sudden burst of light is unquestioned; but that light did not burst forth from a “singularity” into which all the matter of the universe had been compressed. Rather, that initial abundance of light burst forth from another kind of ‘singularity’: the energy potential of the eternal Mind, who is both the universe’s Creator and the universal Soul pervading it. Who else could produce an Energy that transforms itself into substantial forms as material particles along with the purposeful forces required to establish such a universe? Who else could pervade that universe as Mind, and animate each fully evolved form with a living consciousness? Who else could fill the universe with His own Consciousness, imbuing living beings with distinct identities and an individualized self-awareness?

Clearly, that eternal Mind that we call ‘God’ is the source and power of all that is. He has produced all these bodies and their evolutionary developments from His all-powerful light; and He is the inner Soul permeating all matter which we identify within ourselves as ‘I’. Indeed, all is He, and all glory is His. What else might we imagine exists? Who else might we imagine ourselves to be? All the material universe and all the forces operating within it are evolved from His outspreading light, breathed forth nearly fifteen billion years ago. Yet this immense burst of light-energy would have remained but a teeming chaotic mass, random and lifeless, without His conscious direction, without His indwelling Spirit. His manifestation of a material universe is plainly evident to us; but His

guiding Spirit is subtle and hidden from our view. We may infer the existence of that subtle Spirit by observing Its effects in the universe and in ourselves; but It is known directly and with certainty only when He reveals Himself as our inner Self.

So, as I hope I have made evident, there are *two* different ways in which the one Creator-God manifests: (1) As the Mind, Spirit, or Soul that permeates all matter, and which constitutes the limited mind, or soul, of each individual sentient being; and (2) As the producer of the light-energy that transforms into the material particles that make up the physical universe. So that, with these two aspects of Himself, He constitutes both matter and Spirit, both body and soul; thereby constituting all that exists. Though some might object philosophically to what appears to be a dualistic perspective, I would point out to those objectors that, since both the substance of the material universe and the indwelling Mind, or Spirit, both derive from one and the same supreme Being, there is, in fact, no duality, but rather an undeniable Nonduality—or, if you prefer, a Unity. That the one God manifests in these two different ways does nothing to detract from His singularity.

There is one other issue I wish to resolve: and that is whether the light-energy that the Creator produces to form the material universe is His own substance or a second substance other than Himself. I maintain that the great burst of light-energy which formed the vast universe is a projection of His own power and is therefore identical with His own essential Being. He did not borrow some other substance to make the physical cosmos; from where would He borrow it? No; He breathed forth that active light-energy from Himself. Though the universe is not *synonymous with* the supreme Consciousness, it is a projection of His inherent power and does not belong to any other category than Himself. It emanates from Him and is therefore of His Being.

Both the light-energy that transforms into the material universe and the indwelling Spirit, or Soul, derive from the same Divinity; and yet they are not the same. They are different in quality and characteristics and are distinct and obviously separable from one another. The forms that evolve from His light-energy are subject to entropy and dissolution. They appear for a brief time; and when those material forms cease to function as viable entities, the indwelling Spirit departs. The forms of His light-energy are therefore transient and subject to decay and dissolution; while the Spirit, or Soul, continues to exist eternally. It is immortal.

Now, to the question of *how* the Spirit, the Soul, the Divine Consciousness “permeates” the material world: Some ancient philosophers posited a *pneuma* that the Creator breathed into man exclusively, constituting the human soul; others suggested that the Divine Consciousness fills the entire universe as a numinous and all-pervading intelligence. Accumulated evidence—both from empirical and mystical sources—supports the latter premise. An all-pervasive consciousness may be inferred from the “fine-tuning” effects evident throughout the cosmos, though such an all-pervading Intelligence remains undetected by our technological instruments. It is witnessed directly, however, by the human mind, or soul, during what we call “mystical” experience.

During the “mystical” experience, the individual mind (or soul) is drawn into union with God, the Divine Consciousness, and perceives through and as that Divine Consciousness, seeing from the perspective of that Divine Consciousness. While seeing from God’s perspective, the all-pervasiveness of the Divine Mind is experienced and known. In such awareness, that Divine Consciousness is revealed to the soul as both the initiator of the creative act of universal manifestation *as well as* the living Spirit pervading it. Though this knowledge (*gnosis*) is not what we consider to be ‘empirical’ knowledge, it *is* experiential knowledge. It is knowledge obtained from a transcendent perspective and carries a certainty for the experiencer far above any mere temporal knowledge. ‘Very well,’ you may say; ‘but just *how* does the Divine Consciousness pervade the material universe? How can I picture it or form a conception of it?’

I don’t believe it can be pictured, since that Divine Consciousness is an invisible and noumenal reality. But we can conceive of it by way of analogy: He is present within this world as our individual consciousness is present within our thoughts and dreams. Our thoughts and dreams are within our minds; and because of that, they are permeated by our own consciousness. In this same way, God is present within ourselves and within this world, because this world exists within Him.

This universe, fostered by His light, exists *within* Him. He is all-encompassing. When the “Great Radiance” of God’s light burst forth as an expanding universe of time and space, of substance and form, where must that ‘Radiance’ have occurred? It had to have occurred in the Mind of God! Where else could you put a universe when there is nothing outside of that Divine Mind, when nothing exists or *can* exist but that all-encompassing Mind?

And so, without the need for an “infusion” of the spark of life and consciousness, this world, by virtue of its presence in the Mind of God, is naturally and effortlessly suffused with His living presence. And what we speak of as the ‘soul’ of individuals is simply the embodied expression of His all-encompassing conscious presence. The inclusion of the universe within the Divine Mind obviates the need for an *infusion* of God’s presence as ‘soul’, since His life and consciousness are inherently the very Ground, substance, and support of the world, and constitute its very being. It is this realization that prompted St. Paul to declare, “In Him we live and move and have our being.”

Some people speak of “intelligent design” in the universe, as though God were similar to a human craftsman or architect who had thought out and prepared a blueprint prior to building the universe. But a little reflection on the nature of God reveals that He is neither a maker of blueprints nor a builder. What He is is an unfathomable Intelligence, the all-pervading Mind in which the universe exists, and by whose power it operates. God does not stand apart from the universe, like a builder fashioning a building; He does not “fine-tune” the universe as an object separate from Himself; rather, the universe exists within the Mind of God, and every single speck of it is controlled and coordinated by His will.

Though we have given names to all the various forces comprising our universe, such as ‘electromagnetic fields’, the ‘force of gravity’, the ‘strong’ force, and the ‘weak’ force; all these are simply manifestations of the cohesion inherent in His Mind-born creation. We have also named the material particles mysteriously formed from His light, such as ‘quarks’, ‘protons’, and ‘electrons’; but these also are simply the evidence of the scintillating effusion of His imagination. Only in these last centuries have scientific investigators come to understand just how inconceivably evanescent and indescribable these sub-microscopic particles really are.

As dream-stuff responds to our human will, the stuff of this universe, produced from Himself, responds to His will. And, since He transcends the confines of space and time, those evolutionary changes that, from our human perspective, require eons for their accomplishment, He accomplishes in an instant. Because His Consciousness is all-pervading, all things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain. What appears to our eyes to be random and uncaused is, in fact, the unfoldment of His will.

Consider: If an invisible and omnipotent Mind caused the decay of one particle of uranium and left a second particle intact, would it not appear to those witnessing it that what had occurred was the random spontaneous decay of a particle? And if that same invisible and omnipotent Mind caused a gene in a strand of DNA to mutate, would it not appear to those examining that DNA that what had occurred was the random mutation of a gene? How would one be able to distinguish such a caused event from a random one? All is occurring within that one Consciousness. He has only to breathe, and a million worlds begin and end; and in this breathing, all that is contained within this universe is nourished and sustained.

This body that you regard as your own is actually His—as pebbles are the earth’s, as waves are the ocean’s. In accord with His purpose, the sun daily stirs the waters of your heart, and the vapor of your love flies to the four corners of the world; while at night the moon stills you, and the cold darkness is your bed. All is in accordance with His design. He is the life-pulse of every creature; and when the clanging bells of joy exult within you, it is His joy; the fire of song that inspires you is also His. Even the obscuring dust of unknowing that blinds us to His presence is brought by Him. He is in the clouds and in the gritty soil; and if you bend over a pool of clear water, you may see on the water’s surface the reflection of His face.

How does He pervade every particle of this universe? He is the Mind from which the universe took birth, and the universe exists within Him. All is contained in Him. In Him, there is no I or Thou, no now or then. In Him, life and death are undifferentiated. And that transcendent deathless Self is our eternal identity. So, you see, there is nothing to vanquish, nothing to lament, and nothing on which to pride oneself. In Him, and by Him, all is accomplished in an instant.

* * *

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. Of course, not everyone agrees with the notion of a material universe. Some believe it was never created. Since there is no way to prove the existence of the universe outside of our mental perceptions of it, every few centuries someone frames the theory that the entire physical universe has no actual being outside that interior perception, that it exists solely in the human mind. It is a theory that has been postulated by the eighth century Indian mystic-philosopher, Shankara; by

certain Buddhist philosophers; by the eighteenth century English philosopher, George Berkeley; and by certain popular modern thinkers. But it is a theory that is at once contradicted by the fact that man (*homo sapiens*) did not exist prior to two million years ago—modern humans (*homo sapiens sapiens*) did not exist until around 200,000 years ago; and life, even in its most rudimentary stage, did not exist on this planet prior to around four billion years ago. However, the universe itself is around fourteen billion years old—clearly older than man—and therefore could not have been *originated* in the mind of man, or in the consciousness of any living creature, since the nature of time does not allow an effect to precede its cause. The only continuous consciousness capable of producing the appearance of the universe is that of the eternal Mind of God. Therefore, the theory of a humanly subjective production of the phenomenal universe will not be considered here.

2. According to the current scientific evidence, around fourteen billion years ago the universe was created by a great burst of light that some call “the Big Bang” and others prefer to call “the Great Radiance”. In order to produce an entire universe as vast as this one, that light had to have been at the highest end of the energy spectrum. The most energetic light in the electromagnetic spectrum is that with the highest frequency, and shortest wavelength; that radiation is referred to as “gamma-rays”, a term coined by Ernest Rutherford in 1903.

3. Gamma-rays, or gamma radiation, is radiation that reaches a frequency of 10 exahertz, or 10^{19} Hz, with a wavelength less than 10 picometers, and energies from 400 GeV (billion electron volts) to 10 TeV (trillion electron Volts). Since energy and mass are interconvertible ($E=mc^2$), energy converts to mass, and mass converts to energy. In that immense “fireball” at the beginning of time, trillions upon trillions of photons of gamma radiation collided, and each of these photons converted to a particle-antiparticle pair. So long as the energy of the photon is equal to or exceeds the mass of the particles produced, this conversion occurs. The reverse process also occurred: for example, the mass of an electron-positron pair equals 1.02 MeV (million electron volts); when such a pair collides, it is annihilated, and in its place are two photons of at least 0.51 MeV each. In “the Great Radiance”, particle-antiparticle creation and annihilation were occurring at once on a grand scale. A full explanation of this process in the creation of the material universe may be found in my earlier book, *Body And Soul*; and for a more expertly scientific explanation, see Michael Zeilik, *Astronomy: The Evolving Universe*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, ninth edition; pp.470-475.

4. The medieval English philosopher, Robert Grosseteste (1175-1253) theorized that primeval matter was expanded to form the universe by the impetus of light. But he had not the benefit of the knowledge introduced much later by Einstein that light and matter are alternate forms of the same thing. Regarding

light and matter as two distinct categories, he understood that light, since it “diffuses itself in every direction,” provides a likely medium for the extension of matter in all dimensions.

“Thus light, which is the first form created in first matter, multiplied itself by its very nature an infinite number of times on all sides and spread itself out uniformly in every direction. In this way it proceeded in the beginning of time to extend matter which it could not leave behind, by drawing it out along with itself into a mass the size of the material universe.” (Robert Grosseteste, *On Light*, trans. From the Latin by Clare C. Ried, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Marquette University Press, 1942, 2000; p. 11.)

From our vantage point today, it seems quite amazing how close Grosseteste came to anticipating the astrophysics that only emerged seven hundred years after him. His theory influenced his Oxford student, Roger Bacon (1214-1292) as well, though both still held to an Aristotelian cosmology consisting of spheres within spheres. Neither could guess that it was the light from the Divine that actually transformed or converted into the material particles that constitute the universe of form, and which, through its expansion gave birth to space and time.

5. When gamma radiation photons collide, they convert to matter, becoming a particle-antiparticle pair, such as a proton and an antiproton, or an electron and a positron. These two members of a symmetrical pair possess opposite electric charges, and annihilate upon contact, turning back once again to light (photons). One would expect that, this being the case, every matter-antimatter pair would have annihilated over the course of time, and that consequently there would be no material universe. However, there *is* a material universe. And so, we must assume there was an asymmetry that found its way into this process, sparing approximately one matter particle in every 10 billion produced, which matter particles now constitute what is our material universe. Why and how this asymmetry should exist, however, has not yet been explained.
6. Many believe, as the respected Biologist, Michael Behe, believes, that the propensity for ‘life’ was pre-programmed into the evolution of matter from the beginning:

“I am not saying the origin of life was simply an extremely improbable accident. I am saying the origin of life was deliberately, purposely arranged, just as the fundamental laws and constants and many other anthropic

features of nature were deliberately, purposefully arranged. But in what I'll call the "extended fine-tuning" view, the origin of life is merely an additional planned feature, culminating in intelligent life. The origin of life is simply closer to the very same goal that the other, more distant anthropic features (laws, chemical properties, and so forth) were also put in place to bring about." (Michael J. Behe, *The Edge of Evolution*, New York, Free Press, 2008; p. 216.).

* * *

6. Born of His Light

Don't you know that we are born of His light—that every elementary particle of matter began as a photon of light?
 Every electron, every quark in the interior of every proton or neutron came into being and acquired its properties
 In the transformation of those high-energy photons of light
 Streaming out from the Creator's breath.
 This world and all worlds sparkling throughout the cosmos are made of the radiance of God's power,
 A dancing array of His light's many ephemeral forms.
 And we, evolved from His light, are endowed with the presence of His eternal Self, and live by His life,
 And love with His love and know with His wisdom.
 We are conscious by His marvelous all-pervading awareness;
 We see by His loving grace, and we sing His praise by His gift of song.

Then sing, ye God-born angels of light!
 Raise up your voices to Him whose fabric forms your being and appearance,
 Whose life-pulse fires your heart and breath.
 Remember Him whose goodness molded you, whose love enfolds you,
 Whose existence is the life-stream of your being, and whose
 out-flowing Bliss provides the everlasting joy of your soul.
 Until we wend our way back into His eternal light, sing forth His praise.

* * *

7. I Have But Breathed—Part One

(7-11-2016)

*I have but breathed, and everything is rearranged
and set in order once again.*

*A million worlds begin and end in every breath,
and in this breathing, all things are sustained.*

There are many ancient stories by men of early civilizations which tell of the creation of the universe by a great God, who fashioned it by His hands as a human potter might fashion a pot. But these are just the old stories of ancient men that stubbornly persist in today's world. There are others—contemporary intelligent people, known as 'scientists'—who theorize that the matter that makes up this universe somehow existed first, prior to anything else, and which naturally evolved over time into the far-flung suns, planets, and eventual life-forms, who then create in their imaginations various supernatural causes to explain their existence. But these learned theorists have got it all backwards: I am first; I have always been. I am the great Mind whom you call "God". And it is my breath of energy that makes up this material universe. By "energy", I mean Light-energy. My breath is Light. It is what you call "Gamma radiation", the very most powerful force in the electro-magnetic spectrum. It is that high-frequency Light by which I have created your world.¹

For a long time now, the belief that the universe is simply a random formation of disparate material wave-particles, arising spontaneously in the void of space-time, is a belief that has captured the imagination of the reasoned men who practice science. But, they are mistaken. The energy that appears as the material wave-particles that constitute this world is neither random nor spontaneous, nor is it produced by natural processes; the world of matter—in fact, everything in the universe—has come from my conscious breath of Light-energy. Periodically, I release an abundance of Light-energy, which rapidly transforms into this multiform universe. The last occurrence of this energy release was around fourteen billion earth-years ago, in what you refer to as 'the great Radiance', or 'the Big Bang'.² That Light-energy which was released contains my consciousness, my living will, which forms and guides the entire evolutionary process of material existence, from the initial gamma radiation to the subsequent production of billions of wave-particles that congregate to become the structured worlds and living forms that are manifested to express my multifaceted being.

It's been fifty years since first I revealed to the man writing this how I created the universe, and he has been telling of it for these past fifty years, though few have as yet listened to him. I revealed to the man writing this for you, that, throughout the universe, all things move together of one accord, that even the tiniest grain of sand moves in the current at the bottom of the sea in perfect unison with all creation, in accord with that one single, all-pervasive will. I showed him that I am in all that exists, and that I am the master and doer of all that occurs in this universe; and he has been relating these revelations to you as best as he is able, and making his writings freely available to everyone at his website: www.themysticsvision.com. Those divine revelations given to him fifty years ago are described in his book, *The Supreme Self*, which may be found at his website and freely downloaded to your computer or electronic device, as may numerous other books and articles that he wrote over the years by my inspiration. Understand that these revelations come from me and may be relied upon as true.

* * *

NOTES:

1, To learn more about the divine creation, see the following articles on my website: www.themysticsvision.com: “How God Made The World” (6-7-2013); “First Light” (4-8-2013); “Conclusions, from *Body And Soul*” (7-23-2014) “The Phenomenon of Light” (10-15-2014).

2. Scientists who speculate about the origin of the cosmos are coming to the conclusion that the creation is a recurring event, that the ‘Big Bang’ initiates the universal expansion, and then the expansion eventually slows and reverts to a universal contraction, until it nears complete collapse, when it begins its explosive expansion once again, and so on *ad infinitum*—much like the rhythmic alteration of a breath. If, as scientists now theorize, the ‘Big Bang’ of fourteen billion years ago was really just one of many ‘Big Bounces’, there is no way to know whether it was the first, second, or eighteen hundredth evolutionary cycle of universal manifestation. Existence is eternal, but human life is short. And our concerns do not usually extend beyond the requirements of a single lifetime. But, as we evolve over the course of each universal cycle, the meaning of it all—the purpose of our lives on this cosmic Ferris wheel—will no doubt become more clear to us.

We must always remember, however, that the journey is purposeful, and is not, as the scientists imagine, merely the automatic unfolding of a mechanical process. This universe of living beings is originated and unfolds by the sweet conscious Grace of God in whom it lives.

* * *

8. I Have But Breathed—Part Two (9-25-2016)

*I have but breathed, and everything is rearranged
And set in order once again.
A million worlds begin and end in every breath,
And in this breathing, all things are sustained.¹*

You may not believe that those are the words of God; you may not believe that the testimonies of the mystics are true; you may not even believe that there are such things as *spiritual* or *mystical* experiences; but you must admit that the idea that the universe originated through the ‘Divine Manifestation’ of Light is still a tremendously appealing theory.

The theory of Divine Manifestation—which can never be accepted as ‘science’—holds that the Originator of our universe is a single eternal Mind—conscious, omniscient, and omnipotent—that has the power to emanate a powerful burst of electromagnetic radiation (Light), which It does periodically over the course of billions of years in a manner similar to the alternation of one’s breath—at first expelled, and then withdrawn—in an unending cycle. That Light, a divine energy, manifests as EM radiation of a very high frequency—well into the gamma range²—the expansion of which initiates the direction and sequential nature of time, as well as the formation of matter and antimatter wave-particles. As the Light expands and cools, it begins its almost magical transformation from energy to Matter. The explanation of how and when the particular elements of the universe were formed from that point onward is a matter reserved for the qualified practitioners of empirical physical science.

Light (EM radiation) is the medium by which Spirit becomes Matter. It is the transformative “substance” that bridges the gap between the Divine Mind and the phenomenal universe. Light is energy, and energy (at its highest frequencies) is

transformable into material wave-particles. In its initial abundant profusion, that Light expanded as countless colliding photons that literally transformed into quarks and electrons, which then combined to form protons and neutrons, the atoms that are the building-blocks of the stars and planets which comprise our universe. And yet, despite all our advances in scientific knowledge about electromagnetic energy over the centuries, there is still much about light that remains a great mystery to us. On the other hand, Spirit, the Divine Mind, is wholly unknown; It is not an entity or agency that is even recognized by science to exist.

Science is a method of human enquiry that recognizes only empirical—that is to say, demonstrable—evidence, and Spirit is *not* demonstrable by any means that register as sense data. Spirit is wholly noumenon; It is not a phenomenon that can be physically demonstrated. This is why science, to be science, is unable to investigate the theory of Divine Manifestation as an explanation for the existence of our world, even though it is clearly the most obvious, the most reasonable, explanation for the origin of matter that has been proposed. Those who practice ‘science’ are precluded by their method of enquiry from acknowledging the role of the Divine Mind in the creation of the universe; and that is why science in the twenty-first century is mired in the embarrassing quandary of having to nominate only *material* causal agents for the role of “originator” of the Big Bang. What a shame!

For many, however, the theory of Divine Manifestation is a theory of the origin of the universe that provides not only an explanation of the origin of matter, but also the only reasonable explanation for the existence of life and consciousness as universal qualities inherent in the Divine Mind. This theory also accounts for the many apparently fine-tuned conditions in the early universe that provided so presciently for the possibility of the existence of living creatures, and it serves, above all, as a much-needed cultural narrative of foundational understanding, replacing the old well-worn, but long discounted, Creation myths handed down through the ancient scriptural texts. Happily, this theory of the Divine Manifestation of Light ³ is not only a believable explanation of the origin of the universe but is *the only* reasonable and plausible explanation of how the universe and all life began and should serve well to strengthen the confidence of the people in God’s presence and providence in their lives today.

NOTES:

1. From *The Song of The Self* by Swami Abhayananda, in his book, *The Supreme Self*, Atma Books, 1984.
2. The highest frequency radiation, Gamma radiation, is radiation that reaches a frequency of 10 exahertz, or 10^{19} Hz, with a wavelength less than 10 picometers, and energies from 400 GeV (billion electron volts) to 10 TeV (trillion electron Volts).
3. For a more detailed discussion of the theory of ‘Divine Manifestation’, please see my earlier articles on “The Phenomenon of Light (from *Reflections On The Soul*, 2010; rev. 10-15-14)”, “How God Made The World (2012; revised 6-7-2013)”, “First Light (4-8-2013)”, “Conclusions, from *Body And Soul* (7-23-2014)”, and “I Have But Breathed—Part One (8-10-2016)”.

* * *

9. Yogananda's Metaphor

(1-4-2016; rev. 5-10-2016)

The great 20th century spiritual teacher, Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952), frequently used the metaphor of a movie theater to describe God’s projection of this multiform world. In Yogananda’s early days in America (in the 1920’s) the motion picture show was still a novelty, and as he began to lecture on God-realization, he frequently spoke to his audiences of how the experience of visiting the projector room during the performance of a movie had such a profound effect on him. Watching from the projector room, he saw that a single beam of white light from the projector appeared on the screen as images of various characters, and while the audience readily became wholly identified with these characters and wholly sympathized with their fictional adventures, joys, and sorrows, the single beam of light that was the source of the film drama went largely unnoticed.

Yogananda was struck by how clearly the imaginary show produced by the movie projector provided a clear metaphor for the phenomenal creation produced by God as our world. Just as, in the real world, people focus on the current drama before

them and ignore the divine Light which is the *Source* of the drama, the people in the theater became identified with the illusory projected reality, remaining blind to the single beam of light which is the true source projecting it. Yogananda, having seen this phenomena for himself, often cautioned the people in his audiences against becoming caught up in the illusory drama of the world, and forgetting the Reality behind it. In one of these Talks, he said: "...Realize that all this world which you see, of terrible wars and troubles, is nothing but a picture show, a cosmic motion picture show in the sky. ... Do not get mixed up with this movie; these terrible movies of God have one purpose – to get [you] to the beam [the light] ...then you will realize it was only a show."

For Yogananda, the image of a movie projector and its projections worked remarkably well as a metaphor for reality, but when we examine it closely, we have to question: 'Are there any real similarities between the projection of a movie in a theater and the divine projection of the cosmos?' That depends on who you ask, of course. Spiritual thinkers and those who have actually experienced spiritual vision might reply that 'Yes, there is some similarity between them.' Scientists, on the other hand, would likely be hesitant to agree. Nevertheless, while there is never a consensus of opinion in matters of cosmic origins, there have recently been many theoretical physicists who have rejected the once popularly-accepted idea that the universe was created from a spontaneously-formed mathematical singularity—a dimensionless point of infinite density containing the totality of all mass-energy and all spacetime, and are taking a second look at the idea of a transcendent and omnipotent Creator, a divine Mind capable of producing the immensity of high-frequency light-energy required to transform into a consciously directed universe of matter.¹

In Yogananda's metaphor, the 'projector' corresponds to the transcendent and invisible divine Mind universally regarded as 'the Creator'. The stream of white light shining through the transparent movie film represents the projection of the living energy of the divine Mind, with Its own internal storehouse of ideational prototypes. And the film impressions that become projected onto a screen as perceivable images represents the spontaneous translation of the divine high-frequency light energy into microscopic forms (wave-particles) that then gather into macroscopic forms (molecular structures), and eventually become a fully constituted array of conscious living beings projected onto a four-dimensional backdrop of time and space.²

It's not that God actually shoots out a beam of light that is projected onto a screen like in a theater. No. The light that becomes this world is a divine Light that He projects within Himself. He is the creator of the universe and He is also its very being. He periodically breathes forth this transformative Light to reproduce the material creation and to recreate the drama of life's evolution from ignorance to enlightenment. That evolution is the natural expansion of His Love. Like a breath—rising and falling. All is Himself, and you too are His own manifestation.

Yogananda's message reiterates the message of all the enlightened that, even though this world is a product of God's own energy, containing both positive and negative forces, it is, ultimately, a projected illusion, and is, in the final analysis, unreal.³ Therefore, we must keep our singular focus on the one eternal Light projecting this world, letting our hearts remain ever united to that unchanging One who is truly our own divine Self. Here, listen to his own words, from a Talk recorded in 1941:

“This world is all a motion-picture projection of God's mind. There is no death, no disease, no wickedness. Someday when He will show you His Light transforming itself into this terrible cosmic motion picture of life and death, and then withdraw the picture so that only His Light remains, you can laugh at the unreality of His light-and-shadow creation. You will know then that He has created everything out of His Light; and that only the Light is real. We must fully shake ourselves out of this dream delusion to realize that we [ourselves] are rays of that immortal Light.”⁴

* * *

NOTES:

1. If you would like to explore the understanding of how God's high-frequency Light becomes wave-particles of matter, and then macroscopic forms, and then you and me, read my website articles: “The Phenomenon of Light (10-15-2014)”, “How God Made The World! (6-7-2013)”, and “First Light (11-01-2013)”.
2. Where Yogananda's analogy/metaphor breaks down is in the fact that, in God's projected show, there is no recorded film through which and by which the light is transformed into the action-drama that is our spatio-temporal reality. The light itself contains the action-drama! The light *is* the action-drama!
3. Many react negatively to the notion that all this world is an illusion and is therefore unreal. But this becomes more understandable when we consider that

“real” in this context means “permanent”, “eternal”; and that only God fits that definition.

4. From Paramahansa Yogananda, *Man’s Eternal Quest*, Self-Realization Fellowship, Los Angeles, 1982; “The World Is Only Pictures of Light”, p. 397.

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10. *Maya: The Power of God* (from *The Wisdom of Vedanta*, 1991)

In the final chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna says to Arjuna: “O Arjuna, the Lord dwells in the heart of all beings, while revolving them all on the wheel (of transmigration) by His mysterious power of *Maya*.”¹ This word, “Maya,” is one, which we hear quite often in discussions of Vedanta, and, because it is a word that is so often misinterpreted, I’d like to see if I can clear up any misunderstanding about it.

We may well understand that ‘Brahman’ is a name for the Godhead, the absolute Consciousness, the eternal Mind, which mystics throughout history have experienced as the transcendent Source of all creation. It is said by those who have known It to be pure Consciousness, Bliss, unmoving, unchanging, unqualified, beyond all form and beyond all activity. How then, the rational intellect questions, can such a quiescent Emptiness create a universe of myriad forms? The difficulty of explaining this satisfactorily is readily acknowledged even by those who have experienced It directly. The truth of the one Reality is “seen” clearly in the mystical “vision,” and yet to describe It is nearly impossible, because Its mode of existence is unique, and without parallel in the phenomenal world, and for that reason, there is nothing else with which It may be truly compared.

Those seers who do speak of It say that the one Reality has two distinct aspects: It is the absolutely pure Consciousness, which remains as the eternal Ground, the immoveable Witness; and yet, at the same time, It possesses the power of projecting a manifold universe upon Its own Self. Frequently, the analogy is made of a mind and its power of projecting thoughts or images upon itself. These two aspects of our own immediate experience help us to grasp a little of what these two cosmic principles: *Brahman* and *Maya*, are like.

“Maya” is just another name for God’s power of manifestation, His power of form-projection. However, the word, “Maya,” is also used to signify the form-projection itself. It is God’s Power of manifestation, which remains eternally with Him, whether there is a manifestation or not; and it is also the actual world of forms which results from that power. Maya, in other words, is both the cause and the effect, both the Creator (or Creatrix) and the creation.

This word, “Maya,” is synonymous with all the other words used to represent the manifestory Power of God, such as “*Shakti*,” “*Prakrti*,” “*Logos*,” etc. So many different words exist because every seer of every time and place has found it necessary to give a name to the creative power of God in order to distinguish the temporal from the eternal, the phenomenal appearance from the constant and unchanging Ground. “Maya,” like so many of the other names for this “power,” is a noun of the feminine gender. Just as the absolute Godhead is referred to as the figurative “Father,” His Power of manifestation is commonly referred to as “Mother,” as in “Mother Nature.” Maya is the Creatrix, the divine Womb from which everything is born, sometimes called the Will, or the effulgent Glory, of God.

Understand that God’s Power is not something *other* than God—just as our own power of thought-production is not distinct from our minds to which that power belongs. However, we must bear in mind also that, just as the thoughts and images which are produced in our minds are mere ephemera which come and go, and once gone, have no claim to existence, so, likewise, the various forms in the universe, however alluring and seductive, or however frightening and dreadful, are mere ephemera which come and go, and are, by that standard, illusory, or unreal. The Power, Maya, exists eternally, being inherent in God; but the world-illusion, Maya, is transient, having a beginning and an end.

Those who have experienced God, through contemplation, have “seen” the creation of the world-illusion, its flourishing, and its dissolution, in a recurrent cycle. It is somewhat like the recurrent cycle of breath, which we, as creatures, experience. In something similar to an exhalation, the Lord manifests and plays out the drama of the universe; and, in something similar to an inhalation, He draws it all back into Himself once again. In just one breath, the whole universe is created, evolves, and is ultimately withdrawn again into its Source. From the perspective of God, it is but a fleeting breath; from our temporal perspective, it is an immensity of time. Perhaps our own breath, which seems to us but momentary,

is an eternity to certain sub-atomic particles, whose life span is measured in millionths of a second. See how relative our concept of time and space is!

While Maya is the breath of God by which the universe of time and space is created, from our own temporal perspective, that breath manifests as ‘the Great Radiance’ or ‘Big Bang’ from which and by which all else is produced. That ‘Great Radiance’, last occurring fourteen billion years ago, is an immense burst of high frequency electromagnetic radiation that rapidly transforms into quantum wave/particles which, combining with other such wave/particles, produce the appearance of the various forms of matter which constitute this vast universe. The production of this ‘illusory’ universe of discreet material forms within an infinitely extended space also creates the illusion of time. Our experience of the passage of time, as Albert Einstein showed us, is relative to our positional perspective, so that years may seem to pass which, from another perspective, are but passing moments—just as in a dream. Let me tell you a story, which illustrates this phenomenon:

Once, the legendary sage, Narada, was out walking with Krishna, who is, of course, representative, in literature, of God. In the course of their conversation, Narada asked God to explain to him the mystery of His Maya. And the Lord said, “Alright—but before I do, since my throat is a little dry, please fetch me a drink of water.” So, Narada ran off to find some water for the Lord. In the course of his search he came to a pleasant little hut, where he stopped to get directions to the nearest water, but when the door to the hut was opened, there stood a most beautiful young maiden with whom Narada was immediately smitten. As she invited him inside, Narada forgot all about his mission to fetch some water to his Lord; and, as the days passed very pleasantly, Narada fell more and more in love with his beautiful hostess, and soon they were wed.

Before long, the blissful couple had children, and Narada toiled in the field to grow food for his growing family. He was extremely happy with his new family and thought himself to be surely the most fortunate of men to have such a beautiful wife and such fine children. But, one day, a great monsoon rain fell; and for many days thereafter the rain continued. The riverbanks overflowed, and the little hut was filled with water. Narada climbed, with his family, to the top of the hut, clinging with one hand to the roof, and with the other to his wife and children. But the rains continued, and the hut began to collapse from the flooding waters. First one child, then another, was swept away in the raging torrent; and finally, Narada

felt his darling wife slip away from his grasp as well. Then, he too was swept away in the flood, crying out in the darkness for his wife and children.

At last, nearly unconscious, and completely exhausted, Narada found himself washed up on a wreckage-strewn shore. And, as he lay there desperately lamenting the loss of his family, he suddenly looked up to see the feet of Krishna at his head. Quickly, he struggled to his feet, and Krishna, with an ironic smile, asked, “Where have you been, Narada? I sent you for water nearly ten minutes ago!” It was in this way that the Lord showed to Narada His power of Maya. Indeed, this life *is* much like a dream, in which we become entirely involved and embroiled, forgetful of our real purpose, only to wake to find that the people, things, and events we thought real were, in fact unreal—a mere play of thought.²

“All this [world],” said the insightful sage, Shankaracharya, “from the intellect to the gross physical body, is the effect of Maya. Understand that all these and Maya itself are not the absolute Self, and are therefore unreal, like a mirage in the desert.”³ “Real,” for Shankaracharya, meant “eternal,” That which always was and always will be. This phenomenal universe obviously does not fit this definition of “real,” and is therefore “unreal”—like a mirage. It is only God’s imagination—similar in some ways to a dream. Do you remember the following song:

Row, row, row your boat,
Gently down the stream.
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily;
Life is but a dream.

That song conveys the idea of Maya. And this is a great understanding to have of the world. But, of much more significance is the understanding that the Dreamer of the dream, the divine Consciousness, is ultimately the only Reality, and is therefore, without doubt, our own ultimate Identity. And so, whatever apparently desirable conditions we become attracted to, and whatever nightmarish conditions manifest before us, if we are able to remain conscious of that eternal Identity, we will always remain fearless and unmoved, confident that we are above and beyond whatever conditions may confront us in this dream-like world. The realization of God, the realization of our eternal Self, is an experience very similar to awaking from a dream in the sense that one who has awakened to the eternal Self is then able to re-experience the dream from a new perspective and enjoy the play fearlessly and with great enjoyment.

When I was a child, I remember I would sometimes have disturbing dreams in which some creature of my imagination would chase me and would be just at the point of gobbling me up, when I would pinch myself in the dream, and wake myself, thus escaping the beast by withdrawing suddenly from the dream to my warm and safe bed. Once I discovered this handy trick, I would taunt the villains in my dreams, secure in the knowledge that, just at the critical moment, when they had me cornered with no apparent exit, I could pinch myself, and disappear from their clutches just like that.

The same kind of confidence belongs to the one who has realized the Self, through contemplation. Just as, when a dream-character awakes, he realizes he is, in fact, the dreamer, likewise, when we, who experience ourselves as manifestations of God's imagination, awake from this dream of a world, we realize that, in fact, we are the Imaginer, the pure Consciousness from whom all this imagined universe sprang. We realize that we are, and have always been, the one Self; that we have always been safe and secure as the eternal and all-inclusive One.

Once we have awakened to the Self, then, when we find ourselves back in the dream, we can share our knowledge with everyone else in the dream. This is what the mystic does; he returns to the dream, the world, and tells everyone, "Hey! This is just a dream. Each of us is really that one Dreamer; He is the Self of all of us. And, if you really want to enjoy the dream in the best possible way, and at the same time know that you're free from the dream, then wake up and realize who you really are!"

This brings to my mind the parable told by Socrates, called "The Analogy of The Cave."⁴ Socrates, who was an enlightened man, attempted to illustrate his own state by asking his listeners to imagine a world in which there were some people chained in a cave far underground, with their backs to a fire before which some other people were parading back and forth. The people chained are facing toward a cave-wall on which the images of the people parading in front of the fire are cast as shadows. The images on the wall are all that they can see, and so they take that to be the reality. Then, one day, one man escapes from his chains. He discovers the fire and the figures marching in front of it and realizes how mistaken he had been in regarding only the shadows as the reality. Then, he discovers a way out of the cave, and he climbs up, out of the cave, into the sunlight, and discovers the real source of light in the world. He is overjoyed, and elated, and he returns to the cave, telling everyone, "Look, this is only shadows, illusions! Break your bonds; come up out of the cave and see the reality!" The problem, of course, is that no

one believes him. They think him mad; they curse him and stone him and ostracize him from their company while remaining ensnared in their false shadow world.

That was the analogical story Socrates told as a way of explaining the idea of Maya. But, just as the unchained man in his story was brutally treated by his brothers when he attempted to lead them to freedom, so was Socrates brutally treated in his own life. When he tried to explain the Truth that he had seen to the people of Athens, they scorned him and condemned him to death, and eventually murdered him. Many year later, Jesus of Nazareth also experienced his eternal identity through God's grace, and, like Socrates, was persecuted and murdered for attempting to show people the way out of the cave, out of Maya's snare of illusion, so that they too could know the Truth and be free.

Just as the people living in the underground cave in Socrates' story were unaware that they were even bound by Maya, we also live in Maya's world of duality without even being aware of our ensnarement. In fact, it is only when God's grace reveals our true nature that the duality in which we had previously been living also becomes revealed. In the 7th chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna says, "The whole world is under the delusion of my Maya; for this Maya of mine is very difficult to penetrate. Only those who take refuge in Me go beyond it." ⁵ In other words, it is only by intense devotion and the grace of God that we are released from the delusive power of Maya. If we think of this release as the awakening from a dream, we can easily understand that it is not just the person within the dream who must awake, but the Dreamer must also deliberately reveal Himself. There must be a complicity, or grace, extending from the Dreamer to the dreamed. It's not as though one can awake from the cosmic dream simply by pinching oneself. But, through a strong desire for liberation, with a focused mind intent on God, with an all-consuming will and devotion, it is possible to draw that complicity, that grace, and bring about an "awakening." Then you will be free—even though you still live within Maya's cosmic dream.

Though everything in the world will remain the same after such an awakening, for you, all will be quite different; for your vision of the world will be very different. The clear, perfect nondual awareness shines without blemish, illuminating the mind with its light. But it is not permanent; one does not remain in that nondual state continually thereafter. Still, it is an experience that cannot be forgotten, and the radiant memory of its revelation permeates one's consciousness ever after. That divine awareness remains as the underlying content of one's mind, an ever-

present certainty upon which one constantly dwells. From that moment on, you will carry with you the awareness of your eternal Self, and you will view all this dream-like world as your own glorious play. Maya will no longer bind you in any way, for you'll know that you are, in truth, the Lord of Maya. As the great Shankaracharya said, "Maya is destroyed by the realization of the One without a second." The revelation of your true nature destroys all previous limited notions of your identity, just as awaking from a dream destroys the illusory reality of the dream.

Swami Vidyanaraya, another great Vedantic sage, wrote, "Maya is called 'the wish-fulfilling cow.' It yields milk in the form of duality. Drink as much of it as you like; but the Truth is non-duality." ⁶ Final release from all duality, including life and death, is obtained only through the knowledge of the Self. One does not come to the end of dreaming until one awakes to that Self.

All the Self-realized sages agree: the knowledge of the Self is the only means to transcend the ignorance in which we are enmeshed due to the veiling power of Maya. Once one has awakened from the dream-world of Maya, he may enter back into the dream, with the awareness of his eternal Identity, and he is never troubled by the occurrences within the dream-world again. He is aware that he *is* everything that appears before him, that everything that happens is a mere imagination, and that he can never be threatened or destroyed. All is himself; and, at the same time, he is quite free and safe, beyond the effects of all this temporal phantasmagoria of things and events. He knows within himself: "I am the Absolute, completely independent, ever-pure, eternal and free. I pervade everything; I am everlasting, undefiled, pure Existence, beyond Maya, without cause or limitation. I alone am. I am the one eternal Consciousness." ⁷

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NOTES:

1. *Bhagavad Gita*, 18:61.

2. Who has not fallen at least once into the snare of Maya, just as Narada did? No one, I'd wager. Not even the greatest saint has managed to entirely escape Maya's seductive spell of illusion.

3. Shankara, *Vivekachudamani*, III:7; Prabhavananda & Isherwood, *Shankara's Crest-Jewel Of Discrimination*; Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1978, pp. 51-52.

4. Plato, *Republic, Book VII*

5. *Bhagavad Gita*, 7:14

6. Vidyanarany, *Panchadashi*, 6:236; H.P. Shastri (trans.), *Panchadashi by Vidyanarany*; London, Shanti Sadan, 1965, p. 161.

7. It is because of Maya that the One appears to be two. The one eternal *I*, when seen through the dualistic perspective of Maya, becomes divided into an 'I' and a 'Thou' to whom it relates. Only when, by God's grace, Maya is transcended, are we able to become aware of ourselves as the one eternal *I*. Without that grace, we remain confined to the perspective of Maya, dividing ourselves into an 'I' and a 'Thou'. From that dualistic perspective, 'Thou' art the transcendent Lord, and 'I' am Thy servant, an individual soul among other souls. Most of our time on earth, therefore, is experienced from the perspective of Maya. The undivided Self is always the ultimate Reality, but only rarely are we granted the nondual vision of that one Self. For more clarity on this issue, see my articles, "How To Meditate on The Self (1991)" and "The Path of Divine Love (1991)".

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11. Fundamentals of Existence (7-27-2016; rev. 7-29-2016)

It seems to me that, with the current worldwide emphasis on education aimed at scientific and technological progress, there has been a corresponding decline in education focused on obtaining a broad philosophical understanding of the fundamentals of the reality in which we live. Religion was once the major source for our understanding of these fundamentals, but it is much less reliably so in our current age. Let us look back, then, to a pre-scientific age, in search of what were considered to be the fundamentals of existence as taught by the ancients:

I.

In India's most ancient scripture, the *Vedas*, one of the words for God, the Divine Consciousness, was *Purusha*, a masculine noun, meaning "the Person," or "the universal Self". That Divine Consciousness (*Purusha*) was said to have produced the universe of time and space through the power of Its Creative Energy, or *Prakrti*, a feminine noun. Later, in the 8th or 9th century B.C.E., a sage named Kapila adopted this terminology exclusively, and his theology of *Purusha* and *Prakrti* became known as *Samkhya*, which, like *Veda*, simply means "knowledge". Then, sometime around the 5th century B.C.E., another sage, by the name of Vyasa, wrote an epic story called the *Mahabharata*, within which was embedded a dialogue between the Avatar, Krishna, and his charioteer, Arjuna, that took place on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. That dialogue is famously known as the *Bhagavad Gita*, or "the Song of God". In this spiritual parable, Vyasa, adopting Kapila's by now well-known Samkhya terminology, explains, through Krishna, that *Purusha* is the Divine Lord, and *Prakrti* is His Creative Energy.

Prakrti is sometimes defined as "Nature" or "Matter", but *Prakrti* is more precisely God's Creative Energy, from which, at the beginning of a universal cycle, the material universe, or nature, originates and evolves, and to which, at the end of each universal cycle, the universe returns. *Prakrti*, therefore, is essentially the totality of the Divine Light that constitutes 'the Great Radiance' of which and by which the universe is formed, and into which it is once again subsumed. So, according to the *Bhagavad Gita*, these two, *Purusha* and *Prakrti*, the Divine Consciousness and Its Creative Energy, are the fundamentals of the reality in which we live. Initially, and ultimately as well, there is only *Purusha*; there is only God, since *Prakrti* is produced by, exists in, and belongs to *Purusha*. It is *His*

Creative Energy! *Prakrti* is never really distinct from *Purusha*; it only appears to be—as it provides the apparent distinction between Matter (*Prakrti*) and Spirit (*Purusha*), constituting respectively one's body and soul, each of which possesses a distinct destiny—one briefly in time, the other in eternity.

Prakrti is eternally within *Purusha* and is thereby suffused with the Divine Consciousness of *Purusha*. *Prakrti* is enveloped in and pervaded by the Divine Consciousness, and is never distinct from or isolated from *Purusha*, but is always contained within It. So, while the material universe, produced by and consisting of *Prakrti*, is a transient phenomenon, of merely temporary duration, *Prakrti*, the Creative Energy of *Purusha*, is itself eternal.

II.

These two fundamentals, the Divine Consciousness and Its Creative Energy, appear in other cultures as well, such as the Chinese Taoist culture, where the Divine Consciousness and Its Creative Energy, known in India as *Purusha* and *Prakrti*, are referred to as *Tao* and *Teh* by the great originator of the Taoist tradition, Lao Tze, who lived in the 6th century B.C.E.:

"Before heaven and earth existed, there was something unformed, silent, alone, unchanging, constant and eternal; It could be called 'the Source of the Universe.' I do not know Its name and simply call It "Tao." ...That Nameless (*Tao*) is the Father of heaven and earth; that which is named (*Teh*) is the Mother of all things."¹

Lao's compatriot and fellow Taoist, Chuang Tze, who lived in the 3rd century B.C.E., elaborated on Lao Tze's words:

"In the beginning, even nothing did not exist. There was only the *Tao*. Then something unnamed which did not yet have form came into existence from the *Tao*. This is *Teh* (the Creative Energy), from which all the world came into being. ... It is in this way that *Teh* created all forms."²

"The *Tao* is the source of the activity of universal manifestation, but It is not this activity. It is the Author of causes and effects, but It is not the causes and effects. It is the Author of universal manifestation and dissolution, but It is not the manifestation or dissolution. Everything

proceeds from It and is governed by It; It is in all things, but is not identical with things, for It is neither divided nor limited.³

"*Tao* is invisible, hard to hold, and difficult to describe. However, I will outline It for you: The visible world is born of the Invisible; the world of forms is born of the Formless. The creative Energy (*Teh*) is born from *Tao*, and all life forms are born of this creative Energy; thus, all creation evolves into various forms.

"...Life springs into existence without a visible source and [at the end of a cycle] is reabsorbed into that Infinite. The world exists in and on the infinite Void; how it comes into being, is sustained and once again is dissolved, cannot be seen. It is fathomless, like the Sea. Wondrously, the cycle of world-manifestation begins again after every completion. The *Tao* sustains all creation, but It is never exhausted. ..." ⁴

So, as we can see, the great mystics of previous centuries have described the fundamentals of existence in ways very similar to our current view. This is because, throughout the centuries, the (mystical) experience wherein these fundamentals of reality are revealed in interior vision is consistently the same for all who experience it.

What the author of the *Bhagavad Gita* saw, the Buddha and Jesus saw, and I also have seen. What Lao Tze and Chuang Tze saw, Heraclitus, Ibn Arabi, and Meister Eckhart also saw, and I have also seen. In fact, the knowledge of the fundamentals of existence remains the same for all who have experienced this revealed vision. There is one Divine Consciousness who manifests this universe by the emanation of a Creative Energy produced from Itself. This magnificent world of ours, including our own conscious selves, is made of that one Divine Consciousness and Its Divine Energy; and each of us, by searching within ourselves, is capable of knowing that Divine Source who constitutes our fundamental reality, and is truly our own eternally blissful and undying Self.

III.

In today's world, however, *Purusha* and *Prakrti* are seldom mentioned; these two are more likely to be referred to as "God, the Father" and "Mother Nature". But these two complementary aspects of Divinity—an eternal Mind and Its Creative

Power—are not recognized by the scientific community. The world of science *does* recognize the existence of an Energy that manifested as "the Big Bang" some fourteen billion years ago, and which constitutes our current universe, but that Energy is not referred to as *Prakrti*, nor is it seen as having its source in the Divine Mind, or *Purusha*. The Fundamentals of Existence, as experienced in the mystical vision of a few individuals scattered throughout time, seems to carry little weight in the science-oriented world of today.

Today, science holds the floor, and contemporary scientific thought does not allow for the existence of an eternal (ever-existent) Consciousness that precedes, emanates, and pervades the natural (phenomenal) universe. Such a scenario is precluded by the very nature of "science," which, by definition, is confined solely to empirically demonstrable evidence. An eternal supernatural origin that breathes forth the mass/energy that constitutes the natural universe clearly has no place in such an empirical discipline. In their earnest desire to know with certainty, scientists have seen fit to outlaw empirically undemonstrable truth, even though that truth has been experienced in mystical vision for thousands of years. It appears that, instead of being led by the vision of our seers, today we are led by the vision of our technicians. Is it any wonder that our civilization seems to be descending into the darkness of ignorance?

But hold the phone! The great majority of the people of our civilization care little for the speculations of science; even today, the majority of the people continue to rely strongly upon the teachings of their spiritual seers and hold intuitively to confidence in the truth that this world in which we live is created and permeated by God. The strength that each person draws upon in life is invariably the strength of his or her inner Spirit; it is the strength of our divine souls, placed in our hearts by God. And though, in our darkest hours, the world seems just as terrible as it is painted by its most cynical detractors, we discover again and again that the divine Lord who placed us here in this verdant garden lives always in our hearts and reveals His great goodness and compassion in those very moments that He seems most absent. Without fail, He rises from our own hearts to save the day, to right the wrong, to prove the truth of His undying presence. So, never fear. All is well. His mercy still rules; His majesty still reigns. His love still shines within our hearts and throughout the land. And, as always, the lowering darkness will be averted; the Sun will shine again. Praise God.

NOTES:

1. Lao Tze, *Tao Teh Ching*, 25.

2. Chuang Tze, Ch. 12

3. Chuang Tze, Ch. 8

4. Chuang Tze, 22.

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12. The Logic of God (1-1-2013)

On November 29, 2012, the respected online Science journal, <http://Phys.org>, published an article entitled, “The beginning of everything: A new paradigm shift for the infant universe”. In it, they explained that “a new paradigm for understanding the earliest eras in the history of the universe has been developed by scientists at Penn State University.” Using something called “loop quantum theory”, these scientists showed that “the large-scale structures we now see in the universe evolved from fundamental fluctuations in the essential quantum nature of space-time, which existed even at the very beginning of the universe over fourteen billion years ago.” This new research was published on December 11, 2012 as an “Editor’s Suggestion” paper in the scientific journal *Physical Review Letters*.

For the past century, it seems, the lay public has been bombarded with new “scientific theories” of the origin of the cosmos that every schoolchild can recognize as untenable. First it was a supremely dense pea-sized rock containing everything which then exploded. Now it is a quantum foment in the fabric of space-time that resulted in a sudden proliferation of quantum particles. Who is not able to recognize that these ideas begin the universe from a pre-existing entity: the pea-sized rock, or the space-time vacuum, and fail to consider the origin of *these* material ‘things’. An eternal, omnipotent Mind is logically capable of being a beginningless Source; a condensed rock or a space-time teeming with energetic quanta is not.

Though the understanding that the universe was created by an eternal, all-encompassing Mind is less a matter of logic than a matter of insight, the logic also demands the conclusion that there is no way to address the origin of the cosmos without eventually positing an originator, a Creator. Those dedicated to the scientific method would have you believe that this is merely a quaint archaic leftover from a former superstitious era; but try to imagine a logically sound solution to the question of the origin of the cosmos that does not come eventually to an eternal Creator. Is it even possible to clearly imagine any other origin?

Why, then, we must wonder, are those trained in science and the scientific worldview apparently so ill-equipped for logical thinking? We can only surmise that they are moved to frame such illogical theories because of their misguided devotion to the search for an exclusively *material* origin to the cosmos and horrified of allowing their theories to contain anything of the noumenal or the

Divine. That being so, we must conclude that the refusal to accept the obvious is simply an instance of pride, or *hubris* on the part of these scientific theorists. But, of course, the existence of an eternal Creator is not simply a matter of logic; it is a matter of interior revelation—and that is a matter of Grace.

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13. Time And Eternity (from *The Divine Universe*, 2008; revised 12-14-14)

Newton believed in an absolute time; one which is always the same for everyone in every situation. Einstein demolished that view by showing that the measure of the passage of time is relative to motion—differing by the variation in motion between two perceivers. Cosmologist, Stephen Hawking, further clarified time’s non-absolute status by noting that “time is just a coordinate that labels events in the universe; it does not have any meaning outside the space-time manifold.”¹ Indeed, space and time (space-time) only come into existence along with the birth of the universe. Cosmologists assert that around fourteen billion years ago, an incredibly large amount of energy unaccountably burst on the scene and explosively expanded to produce the mass-energy that constitutes this entire universe. In that instant when that energy let loose as the “Big Bang” and began to expand as the plasma that would become particulate matter, space and time also came into existence. Before that, space-time did not exist. To the question, “What was when space-time was not?”, the answer is, “Eternity”.

Now, from a purely theoretical point of view, Eternity can be a very daunting concept, one which cosmologists as a rule refrain from considering. But for those of us who have been privileged to *experience* Eternity directly, it is neither a theory nor a concept. We know, with absolute certainty, that it is the underlying foundation, support, and projecting power upon which this universe of time and space exists. We know that time exists only in the universal manifestation, with a recurrent beginning and end, and that in Eternity there is no such thing as time – no past, no present, no future, no projected universe at all. For Eternity is just another name for the absolute Consciousness that is the Ground and support of the universal projection; and it is the source of the (limited) consciousness which sentient beings experience within themselves. Eternity is the upper reach of Existence, to which the mind may be drawn, if God so wills; and there it is seen that time has no absolute existence but exists only as an elemental byproduct of the

universal expansion of space projected upon the one eternal Mind. It is a measure, as spatial location is, of the progression of universal manifestation.

This universal manifestation is superimposed upon Eternity, as a dream is superimposed upon the consciousness of a dreamer. One could say that the temporal universe and Eternity exist in separate dimensions – as the dreamer and his dream-world exist in separate dimensions, levels, or realms of consciousness. Eternity is the highest level of Consciousness; It is experienced by a mind that is intensely and utterly focused and intent upon the Divine. It completely supplants one's limited individuality, raising one's awareness to Its own place, and revealing one's ultimate identity with Itself. This experience of Eternity is very pleasant. It is single; perfect aloneness, blissfully content. It sends forth a new universe in every breath, while in the same alternating breath annihilating the old. It is so simple and unencumbered that it cannot be conveyed in speech. It is the ancient, unnamed God. It occupies its own place, its own dimension, quite sovereign and alone. The temporal array spewed out in each breath offers no distraction or interruption to the sweetness of Its homogeneous peace. It is its own perpetual delight and satisfaction.

The cosmos, quite a different thing, originates from Him, and dissolves in Him; and time derives from Him, though He is utterly beyond time's reach. It is as a dream, emanating from the mind of a dreamer, exists in its own place, depicting a drama, originating, then reaching a culmination, but in no way affecting the dreamer; even though each of the dream characters is, in reality, the dreamer, and once awakened, returns to the awareness of its true source and Self.

This projected 'real' universe of time and extension is nothing more than a dream. We who live within it are all none other than the one Eternal Mind, and on awaking shall once again know our blissfully eternal Self. And even now, in this temporal moment, in this spatial unfoldment of the cosmic dream superimposed upon the eternal Consciousness, we are in truth that one eternal Self, blissfully content, fully awake, in our solitary, timeless, spaceless place on high. And while this imaged time, begun in that first instant of cosmic appearance along with space, marches on, we momentary creatures move to its rhythms without knowing why or whence, yet happily knowing, by the creator's grace, our everlasting Self beyond time, and singing praise and glory to His name.

NOTE:

1. Stephen Hawking & W. Israel (eds.), *300 Years of Gravitation*, Cambridge University Press, 1989; p. 651; quoted in P. Coveney and R. Highfield, *The Arrow of Time*, N.Y., Ballantine Books, 1991; p. 99.

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14. Life On Earth (9-15-2016)

Who planted the eggs in your mother's womb? Who put the life-force in your father's sperm? And who infused the instinct in each to couple and thereby multiply their kind?

There are those who imagine that all these things originally occurred spontaneously, uncaused, in some warm little pond. But I have seen that all things in existence move together of one accord, in obedience to the inviolable will of the Creator. Inquisitive men and women have minutely examined the simplest forms of life, but they have found no trace of His handiwork, no indication of a causal life-force or mechanism. His will leaves no demonstrable trace. Though all-pervasive, He maintains the invisibility of His presence and the mystery of His methodology throughout the universe and the countless ages.

Recently, some Australian scientists unearthed in Greenland some of the oldest traces of life ever discovered. These ancient living forms, called "stromatolites", are biological 'rocks' formed by colonies of microbes, and are found in shallow water. These living 'rocks' were likely shed by an ancient receding glacier and prove that life existed 220 million years prior to the oldest fossils heretofore known, pushing the date for the earliest life on earth back to 3.7 billion years ago, to a period when the earth was still under heavy asteroid bombardment. Did these microbes come to earth via those asteroids? Some think that's a possibility. One thing for sure is that the once popular theory of the slow development of life from the random chemical combinations in some early "warm little pond" is out the window. The time required for the development of the requisite proteins, the process of photosynthesis, and the lengthy and complicated process of evolving the genetic code in order to produce a single self-replicating cell simply does not fit

into the period from the date of the formation of earth to the time in which these microbes flourished.

So, where did life come from, and when did it begin? The simplest and most evident answer is that life comes from God. The Light that God emanated to form this vast universe was most assuredly a conscious Light. The ancient Indian philosophers defined God (*Brahman*) as *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, comprising all being, all consciousness, all bliss. And when I experienced identity with God, through His gracious revelation, I experienced myself as existing blissfully in everything as universal Consciousness. From that experience, I know clearly that it is that Existence-Consciousness-Bliss that manifests as all things living. It is Life itself. And yet no one—certainly not any of us human mortals—knows how life on earth began. The origin of life remains the great mystery. There are biological scientists who think they know how life evolved from simple to more complex forms, from a simple self-replicating cell to various fully formed animals, including us humans; but these scientists readily admit they don't have any idea where that original simple self-replicating cell came from.

Nor do I. Except that, by the knowledge which God revealed in me, I know that the ultimate principle of life originates in Him. I know that He is omnipresent and omnipotent; that He has fashioned this universe of His own substance, and that He is the conscious governor of every movement that takes place within it. I know that every form on earth is His own and lives and moves in accord with His greater will. I know that this universe—its manifestation and its evolution—is one coordinated whole and He is its director. And I know that everything is in His hands, finding its eventual fulfillment and salvation in Him. What wonder, therefore, that in His great production, we live and move, manifesting His own Life, His own divinity, in our loving souls? Since He is both the Source and the manifestation of all life, what other questions about life can there be?

* * *

15. The Greatest Secret (4-20-2017)

Only the Divine Mind is eternally real. The universe, made of His form-producing Energy, appears to be real, but it is only a transient mirage, a colorful illusion. And yet this illusory universe is filled with and enlivened by His Consciousness. He is its Soul, its animating power, and is thereby the life and soul of every being in it. All the forms appearing in this universe are made of His Divine Energy, but, alas, the briefly appearing forms in this phenomenal universe quickly change and vanish; in fact, the entire universe is only an illusory appearance, a fleeting mirage; while *He*, and the Energy He contains, lives forever, undivided, unchanged. He alone, the one eternal Mind, is eternally real. And *that* is who you must one day realize you are. For that eternal One is the origin and substance of your being, the soul of your soul, and your only true Identity. It is the one Self you have always been and will always be.

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16. The Maker of The Game (8-3-2015)

How is it even possible to talk about God when we have so little real knowledge about Him? We are aware that He transcends the universe as pure Spirit, or Mind, or Consciousness, and yet we are also aware that He constitutes the universe itself. He is both our inner conscious Self and the form and substance of everything that we experience. At times we are aware that He is within us, for we are able to come in contact with Him only through our conscious minds; but, upon reflection, it seems more reasonable to assume that the entire phenomenal universe, including ourselves, is contained in Him; and that our intimate conscious contact with Him is therefore a result of our integral presence *within* Him.

In our philosophy, we hold that the material universe is His creation, made of Himself in some way, perhaps as an emanated substance such as light transformed into matter. We have ascertained only recently that the latest burst of that emanated divine Light occurred around fourteen billion years ago as 'the Big Bang' or 'Great Radiance'; and we know that ever since then the material universe has been expanding. Our mystical perceptions as well as scientific reasoning leads us to believe that, eventually, this expansion will turn to contraction, and the whole

thing will collapse in upon itself, only to begin once again in a similar deliberate outrushing of light turned into mass and energy.

We humans relate familiarly with the phenomenal/material world, but the world of Spirit, or the universal Mind, is much more unfamiliar and remote. The nature of the relationship between our own individual soul/mind and the transcendent Mind that is God is not at all clear. We feel that there *is* such an intimate relationship, and mystical experience suggests that each of us is integrally connected with that transcendent Mind, and, at some level, synonymous with It; but how all this is possible is not even remotely understood. To make matters more difficult, the awareness of His immanent presence is, for many of us, notoriously inconstant and tenuous at best.

We must believe that one day our understanding of His nature will become substantially greater, and we shall become more consciously aware of His immanent presence. At present, we must acknowledge our utter lack of true spiritual knowledge, and our nearly complete reliance on faith and the occasional ‘mystical’ glimpses to guide us. Either our present state is simply a prolonged evolutionary stage of ignorance which will eventually pass in time, or it is exactly the way He intends it always to be. Presently, we do not know with certainty what is the objective of our participation in this adventure—or even whether or not there *is* a definite objective.

It may well be that our collective ignorance regarding God's purposes is a necessary requirement to assure the trust and faith on which our individual judgment and responsibility must rely. To be absolutely certain of His will and overly confident of His presence and Grace might in fact diminish our individual merit and detract from the adventure of life as He intends it. But, of course, speculating on God's purposes or motives is a very uncertain and unverifiable business. His intentions are what they are, and, despite the presence of hints occasionally granted, and the occasional glimpses of our divine Identity, we are each clearly responsible for our own judgment in this three-dimensional adventure called “life”, and responsible also for the quality of our own individual relationship to the Master and Maker of the game. I feel certain, however, that, over the course of time's evolution, each of us shall eventually reach the finish line and attain lasting certainty of our eternal Identity in Him. Therefore, to all a heartfelt God bless and Godspeed!

* * *

17. The Purpose of God's Creation (8-13-2017)

The summit of divine evolution comes when God, living and experiencing *as* a human soul in a human body, awakens to the truth that all this is Himself, that He is and has always been the one all-pervading Existence. God gets to experience the joy of this revelation not once, but billions of times in countless different forms over an immense span of time and space. That, I believe, is the hidden purpose of His universal manifestation: to slowly evolve as human souls over lifetimes in utter blindness of ignorance, and then, in a time of His own choosing, to suddenly awaken each of these beings from within themselves to the greatness and beauty and joyfulness of His own limitless and unfathomable being. The thrill of enlightenment multiplied billions of times, the sudden unveiling of His perfection in billions of souls that turn out to be Himself—this is His evolutionary game. This is the answer to the question, 'Why does He do it? What is the purpose of His Creation? I believe it is for this long-prepared and frequently-experienced Joy! It is an awesomely involved adventure, a prolonged drama, played out on countless far-flung stages, in countless unsuspecting hearts. each one culminating in Joy—the ever-new and unimaginable Joy of the discovery of one's own unbounded Self. What an exquisitely marvelous and satisfying game He has devised! Praise God!

* * *

II. DEVOTION

Most of us identify with our own distinctive persona, or individualized soul, and relate to the Divine as a Being other than ourselves. In that sense, it is a dualistic relationship in which the soul or persona relates to God through Devotion. Ideally, Devotion is selfless and one-pointed love for one's Creator. It may manifest in a number of ways: as the love of a child for its Parent; as the love of a lover for her Beloved; or as the love of a servant for her Master. This Devotion continues on a dualistic basis until such time as the devotee is granted the revelation of its own divine nature. At that time, duality becomes Unity, the two become one, and that one knows Itself as the eternal Self.

1. Speaking of God (4-7-2017)

Human language is not appropriate for speaking of God, as we require gender-specific pronouns to represent sentient beings, and God, the source of all sentience, is neither male nor female, but contains, or rather is the source of, both genders. That all-inclusive One cannot therefore be realistically designated as either “He” or “She”. The alternate pronoun, “It”, is ordinarily reserved as a designate of inanimate things, and God, the source of all animate life, cannot be relegated to that narrow linguistic category either. Our language simply does not accommodate the possibility of accurately referring to God. And so, we have no choice but to use whatever pronoun best appeals to us at the time, even while knowing that there is no means of referring to Him that is truly appropriate.

In fact, we refer to God inaccurately whenever we designate [Him] as ‘other’, as a noun. For, since [He] is the substratum in which we ourselves are contained, [He] is never something ‘other’ to which we can relate as a subject to an objective noun. For, in actuality, the subject, “I”, and the object, “Thou”, are eternally one, though, in common usage of subject/object-based language, that fact is obscured. Yet, despite these inadequacies of language, we have no choice but to speak of [Him], as [He] is omnipresent and is invariably involved in every occurrence in the universe and beyond. And so, I ask you to please excuse my unavoidable linguistic blunders, while I do my best to tell what I know of [Him]: He is not known by the intellect, and He is not captured in our human words; He is known only through love and the bestowal of His merciful Grace.

* * *

2. Let All Voices Be Silenced ***(The Wisdom of Vedanta, 1991)***

Let all voices be silenced, and do Thou only, Lord, speak to me in my soul. Let all the clamor of thoughts, stirred up in my restless mind, be stilled; and let my anxious heart find rest in surrender at Thy feet.

Do with me, Lord, as it pleases Thee to do, and let no care for my own well-being arise to trouble my heart; for Thy wisdom and Thy love shall always suffice to guide me day by day.

Dear God, bestower of Grace, lift up my mind to Thee—above all worldly thoughts and concerns, above all reservations and doubts, and let my heart pour forth loving praise in showers of golden song to Thee. Thy will hast always led me in times past through all my troubles, and why should I turn now to my own devices?

Let Thy joy fill my heart and my soul, and lift me, Lord, on wings of longing, buoyed by the breeze of Thy Grace, into Thy perfect stillness, into Thy fatherly embrace.

* * *

3. The Path of Divine Love (from *The Wisdom of Vedanta*, 1991)

Whenever the question arises regarding the path to the awareness of God, one's own Divine Self, we inevitably discover that there are two separate and distinct paths vying for our allegiance. One says, "When you realize God, you will realize that that eternal Self is your true and lasting Identity; therefore, why don't you identify with That, and not with the ephemeral appearance of the ego-mind and body. Remain always identified with that pure Consciousness which is the eternal witness of the mind and body and be free." This is the call to the path of knowledge, or *jnan*.

But there is another point of view, which also asks to be heard; this is the view of those who extol the path of Divine Love, or *bhakti*. Those who follow this devotional path say: "Oh, it is indeed true that your real Identity is the eternal Self, but how can you hope to become aware of that pure and perfect Self without first making your heart and mind pure? First you must foster in your heart the habit of love, and then you may become aware of the One who is unconditional Love.

"Foster in your mind the thought of oneness with all beings; then you may become aware of the One who is Unity itself. Your separative ego, your sense of individuality, keeps you apart from the awareness of the one Self; therefore, humble your ego before the eternal Self in the manner of a servant before his master, or a child before a parent, or a lover before her beloved. Then you will be prepared and able to experience the Infinite, the eternal Self."

Which of these two approaches to Self-realization is correct then? The path of knowledge or the path of love? The knower says, "There is but One; identify with That, for in truth you *are* That!" The lover says, "That may be so, but so long as there is the appearance of a separate self, make it subservient to the universal Self, until it is truly merged in and dissolved in the Divine." Clearly, they are both true, both correct, both valid and proper paths for the sincere aspirant to Self-realization.

There is a saying that the path of devotion and the path of knowledge are like two men, one blind and the other lame. Neither are able to get about on their own. The devotee without discrimination can't see where he's going; and the man of knowledge without love is unable to progress along the spiritual path. However, if we put the two of them together, they manage very well; for then, the man of knowledge rides on the shoulders of the devotee, and the devotee becomes his legs,

while he serves as the devotee's eyes. So, this is what we also must do with the two complementary sides of our own nature; we must utilize them both; that way we have the benefit of both knowledge and devotion.

Oftentimes, the faculty of devotional love is characterized as being the feminine side of our nature; and the sober, discriminative intellect is thought of as being a masculine trait. It is the feminine side of us, which is capable of tenderness, compassion, emotional love, self-effacement through service, etc. And it is the masculine side of ourselves, which allows us to be coldly analytical, logical, dispassionate, unattached, etc. But, clearly, both of these "aspects," present in everyone to some degree, are necessary to our progress in the spiritual life.

If we were to examine the lives and characteristics of the saints and sages of all the various religious traditions whom we have known, we would no doubt find that some were more devotional, some more discriminative. However, I am certain that, in all cases of genuine spiritual greatness, we would find that the intellect and the heart played equally essential parts; for, like the blind man and the lame man, the heart and the intellect are insufficient without the other.

The heart without discrimination falls into the pit of sentimentality and sensuality; the intellect without the sweetness of the heart remains a dried-up cripple, unable to enjoy life in the world. It is my considered opinion that if a person is to reach the highest perfection possible to man, there must be a balance of heart and mind. There must be both the knowledge of the Self, and at the same time, the love of God.

All the great scriptures of all the world's religions extol in one way or another the focusing of the mind on God. This is what is known as "devotion." Listen to how two different sages have defined it: Narada, who was the epitome of the devotee of God, defines devotion in his *Bhakti Sutras* as "the constant flow of love towards the Lord, without any selfish desire." Shankaracharya, who was chief among the followers of the path of knowledge, says in his *Vivekachudamani*, "Devotion is continuous meditation on one's own true Self." It will be evident to the intelligent person that whether we focus our minds on God or on the Self, it is the same; for devotion to God is nothing else but meditation on the Self. In either case, we must transcend the individual ego, the false sense of selfhood.

In the Upanishads, we find a description of how the universe came into being: "This world," it says, "arose from Bliss, lives in Bliss, and will eventually merge

back into Bliss.”¹ This word, “Bliss,” is synonymous with the word, “Love.” Love is God. And Love is the universe. The supreme Lord has manifested Himself as this world out of Love. Existence is nothing but the loving throb of the Divine. I have seen that all this universe is the out-flowing radiance of God’s Love. Man, therefore, is nothing but a flame of Love. Within us is the Divine Love that is God. However, if we are not experiencing that Divine Love, we must ask ourselves how we may discover, experience, and manifest that Love, that Bliss. Those who know, say that Love is attained by loving.

Whether we regard ourselves as the worshiper or the worshiped, there is nothing here but the One, playing both of these roles. Whether we call our intrinsic nature by the name of “Bliss” or “Love,” its taste remains the same. We may call the Eternal by whatever name we like; we may sing it out to our heart’s content. Whether we are gamboling in the streets or sitting quietly in our meditation room, we are always God playing within God. To remember Him is our only happiness; to forget Him our only sorrow.

Meanwhile, we experience His grace in many different ways; and we should recognize that it is God’s grace that is working through us. Perhaps the first grace, the first taste we have of God’s presence in our life, is the grace of aspiration, the desire to understand the nature of our own existence. This grace may occur to us while we are still children, or it may occur when we are older, and have already put behind us all other desires. Such grace may involve the pain of severance from old ties and allegiances; but it is grace nonetheless, and it is drawing us toward the light of our true, eternal Self.

Then comes the dawning of the light of understanding. This is a very special time, a great gift of grace. The mind is suddenly filled with a new and wonderful understanding, which had hitherto been hidden from it. All becomes clear, and all one’s past life is seen to have been leading inexorably toward this present clarity of mind, this new awareness of the unity of Existence.

But this dawning of light is but the beginning. It comes only to whet our appetite. And along with this little bit of light, He also puts before us some obstacles to the keeping of that light, so we might come to understand what those obstacles are that pull the mind away from the clarity of vision. So, we learn to practice patience and to make greater effort to remember Him. He nurses us along in His infinite wisdom, knowing precisely what is needed for each of us to inch along toward

perfection. And there will be many inches gained and then lost, only to be regained.

Even in times of great trouble, God's grace is there. His grace comes to us in two ways: (1) In fulfilling our needs, both spiritual and worldly; and (2) in placing obstacles before us, so that we can grow strong in faith and strong in perseverance. He brings us occasions of trial and dryness so that we may have the victory over all adversities, and thereby become confident in the power and goodness of God within us.

Then there is the grace of devotion, the grace of Love. It is a very special gift of grace and is sought by all the saints who've ever lived. It is the one thing needed to wend one's way to God Himself. And, so, to win this great gift is something much to be prized and prayed for. This is how Krishna, speaking as the incarnation of God, advised his disciple in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

"Give Me your mind and give Me your heart; give Me your offerings and your adoration; and thus, with your soul in harmony, making Me your supreme goal, you shall truly come to Me." ²

And again:

"Only by love can men see Me, and know Me, and come unto Me. He who works for Me, who loves Me, who regards Me alone as his supreme goal, who is free from attachment to all things, and with love for all creation, he in truth comes to Me." ³

In my own case, the grace of love for God came upon me very suddenly and spontaneously. And the more I read of the lives of the saints, the more completely I was convinced that I had no other goal in my life but God, and day by day the grace of love increased in me. For me, there is no doubt that it was God's grace, which drew me lovingly to Himself, and made me to know my oneness with Him. Listen also to what some other Western seers have said about the power of God's grace:

Philo Judaeus:

"Without Divine grace, it is impossible to leave the ranks of mortality; [but] when grace fills the soul, it is possessed and inspired, ...and

hastens to that most glorious and loveliest of visions, the vision of the Uncreated." ⁴...The soul, stirred to its depth and maddened by heavenward yearning, [is] drawn by the truly existent Being and pulled upward by Him." ⁵

Plotinus:

"When the Divine in us stirs us, then the soul becomes filled with a holy ecstasy; stung by desire, it becomes Love. ...When there enters into it a glow from the Divine, the soul gathers strength, spreads true wings, and, however distracted by its proximate environment, speeds its buoyant way to something greater; it's very nature bears it upwards, lifted by the giver of that love. Surely, we need not wonder that It possesses the power to draw the soul to Itself, calling it back from every wandering to rest before It; [for] from It came everything; nothing is mightier." ⁶

St. John of the Cross:

"Desire for God is the preparation for union with Him. If a person is seeking God, his Beloved is seeking him much more. And if a soul directs to God its loving desires, God sends forth His fragrance by which He draws it and makes it run after Him." ⁷

In a time known only to Him, God sends His grace of revelation; He reveals Himself to His lover. And the lover then knows that God is his own Self. He reveals that there never was anything other than God; that nothing at all exists but God Himself. The lover who obtains this grace knows full well that it was God's grace and nothing else that brought to him this vision. All who have obtained it declare to all the world that they realized God by His grace alone. Listen to what some seers from the East have had to say about it:

Dattatreya:

Truly, it is by the grace of God that the knowledge of Unity arises within. Then a man is released at last from the great fear of life and death." ⁸

Shankaracharya:

"Teachers and scriptures can stimulate spiritual awareness. But the wise disciple crosses the ocean of ignorance by direct illumination, through the grace of God".⁹

Sri Ramakrishna:

"You may try thousands of times, but nothing can be achieved without God's grace. One cannot see God without His grace. But God *can* be seen the moment His grace descends. He is the Sun of knowledge. One single ray of His has illumined the world with the light of knowledge. This is how we are able to see one another and acquire various kinds of knowledge. One can see God only if He turns His light towards Himself."¹⁰

Yet even this, the vision of God, is not the end of His graces to His devotees. After this, He bestows many wonderful graces, leading Jesus of Nazareth to say, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, then all the rest shall be added unto ye." All that follows upon the grace of vision is just so many lessons on how to live in absolute freedom; in other words, how to be one with God while eating, sleeping, walking, sitting, while giving, while receiving, while enjoying, and while suffering. This is the grace of freedom, of unity, of perfect contentment. Such continuously ongoing peace and happiness cannot be had without much grace. That grace comes from the Self, from God within us. There is no final grace; it just goes on giving forever.

The author of the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* said it well when he said:

"He is indeed the Lord supreme whose grace moves the hearts of men. He leads us unto His own Joy and to the glory of His Light."

Meditation

The love of God is sweet, O friend! Please do have a taste of it. Call on Him, your compassionate Father, with a true and yearning heart, and He will fill your body and your mind with the nectar of love.

Look up and reach to Him; beg for His embrace. Can a father refuse to draw his child to his breast? Cry for Him, and He will certainly lift you to His heart.

Turn your attention upward within yourself; it is there He lives. Call to Him, and feel the rapture He bestows upon your soul. Delicious caresses He bestows upon the yearning heart! The spine tingles with the rushing fountain of joy that flows upward toward Him. O friend, the love of God is sweet! It is nectar to the thirsty soul. Please don't hesitate; the cup is brimming full. O friend, the love of God is sweet!

NOTES:

1. *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 3:6.
2. *Bhagavad Gita*, 9:34.
3. *Ibid.*, 11:54.
4. Philo Judaeus, *On Drunkenness*, 145f.; Winston, David (trans.), *Philo Of Alexandria—The Contemplative Life, Giants, and Selections*; Ramsey, N.J., Paulist Press, 1981, p. 152.
5. Philo Judaeus, *Who Is The Heir?* 69f, *Ibid.*
6. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 38:6:22-23; Turnbull, Grace, (Ed.) *The Essence Of Plotinus*; N.Y., Oxford University Press, 1934; p. 199.
7. John of the Cross, *The Living Flame Of Love*, III:26-28; Kavanaugh K. & Rodriguez, O., (trans.), *The Collected Works Of John Of The Cross*; Wash. D.C., ICS Publications, 1973; p. 620.
8. Dattatreya, *Avadhut Gita*, I:1; Abhayananda, 1992, p. 15.
9. Shankara, *Vivekachudamani*, III:37; Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 1978, p. 112.
10. Sri Ramakrishna; Nikhilananda, Swami (trans.), *The Gospel Of Ramakrishna*, N.Y., Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1942; pp. 173-174.
11. *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, III:12.

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4. We Who Have Been Blessed (2008)

If we reason clearly and correctly, we must come to the acknowledgment of our utter dependence on God's blessings. We have no power, no intelligence, no sweetness, and no illumination of our own; all that we know as ours is in fact the gracious gift of God. For that reason, we cannot claim to have earned spiritual wisdom or vision by some worthiness of our own making. Whatever comes to us does so of His power and His grace. And so, though I would gladly offer instruction and advice in the endeavor to assist others in joining their soul to God, I am too clearly cognizant of the fact that He alone can bring each soul to His embrace; and that He alone, whose Light illumines all, can peel away the blinders of the illusory ego, and show Himself as the true and everlasting Self of all.

So, what am I to say to those who ask the way to God? 'Follow the noblest that's in you; that will lead you home to Him. Revere silence, solitude, reflection, and deep thought. Read the lives and words of those who found their way to His door, and thus purify your heart. Above all, converse with Him; He'll guide you from within and lead you every inch of the way. Rejoice often in His great love in looking after you and all good souls. He is the inner life, the inner heart, of you; and He seeks only what is your highest joy and light. Turn your face to Him, your mind to Him, your heart to Him; and nothing else at all needs to be done. When it is your time to know your eternal identity, the whole universe, including the stars in the heavens, will conspire to bring about your awakening. Do not fear; no one will be forgotten or left behind.'

* * *

5. Songs In Praise of God (2012)

1. Song of The Self

O my God, even this body is Thine own!
Though I call to Thee and seek Thee amidst chaos,
Even I who seemed an unclean pitcher amidst Thy waters —
Even I am Thine own.

Does a wave cease to be of the ocean?
Do the mountains and the gulfs cease to be of the earth?
Or does a pebble cease to be stone?
How can I escape Thee?
Thou art even That which thinks of escape!

Even now, I speak the word, “Thou”, and create duality;
I love, and create hatred;
I am in peace, and am fashioning chaos;
Standing on the peak, I necessitate the depths.

But now, weeping and laughing are gone;
Night is become day;
Music and silence are heard as one;
My ears are all the universe.

All motion has ceased; everything continues.
Life and death no longer stand apart.
No I, no Thou; no now, or then.
Unless I move, there is no stillness.

Nothing to lament, nothing to vanquish,
Nothing to pride oneself on;
All is accomplished in an instant.
All may now be told without effort.
Where is there a question?
Where is the temple?
Which the Imperishable, which the
abode?

I am the pulse of the turtle;
I am the clanging bells of joy.
I bring the dust of blindness;
I am the fire of song.
I am in the clouds and in the gritty soil;
In pools of clear water my image is found.

I am the dust on the feet of the wretched,
The toothless beggars of every land.
I have given sweets that decay to those that crave them;
I have given my wealth unto the poor and lonely.
My hands are open — nothing is concealed.

All things move together of one accord;
Assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.
The Sun stirs the waters of my heart,
And the vapor of my love flies to the four corners of the world;
The moon stills me, and the cold darkness is my bed.

I have but breathed, and everything is rearranged
And set in order once again.
A million worlds begin and end in every breath,
And in this breathing, all things are sustained.

* * *

2. Thou Art Love

Thou art Love, and I shall follow all Thy ways.
I shall have no care, for Love cares only to love.
I shall have no fear, for Love is fearless;
Nor shall I frighten any,
For Love comes sweetly and meek.
I shall keep no violence within me,
Neither in thought nor in deed,
For Love comes peacefully.
I shall bear no shield or sword,
For the defense of Love is love.
I shall seek Thee in the eyes of men,
For love seeks Thee always.
I shall keep silence before Thine enemies,
And lift to them Thy countenance,
For all are powerless before Thee.
I shall keep Thee in my heart with precious care,
Lest Thy light be extinguished by the winds;
For without Thy light, I am in darkness.
I shall go free in the world with Thee —
Free of all bondage to anything but Thee;
For Thou art my God, the sole Father of my being,
The sweet breath of Love that lives in my heart;
And I shall follow Thee, and live with Thee,
And lean on Thee till the end of my days.

* * *

3. Praise God

I'm here to sing the praise of God, and so I shall.
 And let none think belief's the basis of my song,
 Or words I've read in high-flown works;
 The subject of my song is what I've seen,
 What He's revealed to my most meager sight
 In holy quiet night's retreat.

Though many have praised His creation —
 Its beauties, and its grandeur;
 I would praise Him in His unborn formless Essence
 Where He lives unmoved, and happily serene.

Though He breathes forth the immense and tumultuous cosmos,
 Enjoying the drama of its unfolding activity,
 He remains clearly indivisible
 And perfectly unmoved within Himself,
 Continually aware that He alone exists.
 There is no other; so all's contained in Him.

Serene, yet keenly awake, He spreads
 His outflowing radiance in every direction;
 Delight, unbounded and uninterrupted,
 Permeates Him and all that He proffers.
 In one breath, He flashes forth the universal array,
 And then withdraws it all again,
 Only to breathe once more and fling the stars
 And galaxies wheeling on their rounds again.

For creatures, it's an almost endless parade
 Of eon upon eon, unfathomably deep in time's recess;
 But for him, who knows no change or movement,
 It's but a moment's breath.

And yet the greatest wonder is that every soul breathed forth
 Is but a time-wrought image of Himself;
 And each one, being His by virtue of its life in Him,
 Is capable of finding at its core that One who fashioned it to life.

As a figure in a dream awakes to know he is the dreamer,
 Each soul, when it awakes, discovers it is none but Him.
 He appears as though in a house of many mirrors,
 Fragmented into a million images, yet all are Him;
 It's but a masquerade.

And when the soul awakes to know its deathless Self,
 Beyond imagined dreams of personhood,
 It knows that forever it has lived serene and blissful,
 Just beyond the dream.

It learns that all the devilish battles and tortuous travails
 Were but a thought-parade in which, for the briefest time
 It marched, all unawares, to finally break away
 And find its way to freedom from time's tumultuous play.

To find such freedom one must look within,
 And, gaining clarity of mind, discover who one really is.
 Who one really *is* is Him! For none exists but Him alone.
 It's true! He lives alone in high eternity;
 But He lives as well as you and me.

It's you and me who lives in that eternal sky
 While playing out our destined roles below.
 Two selves, one vigilant while tossing out the stars,
 The other strutting on this stage of dreams,
 Oblivious to the other, her subtler Self and Source.

The all-encompassing, all-sustaining Self of all
 Is quite alone, and quite contained
 Without a drama to behold,
 Until He beams Himself in outward radiance
 As particles and galaxies and separate living things
 In bright array,
 To people all these worlds with beings
 Conscious of their knowing selves.
 His game: to lead them all within themselves
 In stage by stage to knowledge of the ways of things,

And, finally, to awareness of that deeper Self
 Who flung them forth to journey home
 To know the ultimate Truth that they are Him.

Awaking to that joyful knowledge,
 The spell of separation falls away
 Along with fear and worry, woes and cares.
 And, lifted up in mind and spirit,
 The knower lives in peace and joy beyond this world
 Alone, eternal, as all in all.
 He knows the universal design to be his own;
 He walks in freedom. His soul is blest.
 Praise God!

* * *

4. When You Sing The Name of God In Your Heart

When you sing the name of God in your heart,
 When you sing the name of God in your heart,
 The curtains of your soul then part
 And the truth comes streaming in.

When you sing the name of God in your heart,
 A new awareness dawns,
 And the voice that called is silenced
 In the silence that is Him.

Who calls? Whose awareness sings of God?
 Who stands behind the calling and the song?
 The very breath that sings His name
 Is He whose name is called.

The caller recognizes suddenly from whence the song arose
 And turns his attention to the "I" from whom all "I"s derive.
 The consciousness that seeks His embrace
 Is conscious of itself, above the breathing, beneath the song,

And finds, amazed, the One it sought.

How delicate the thread that holds this knowledge close!
 Awareness held aloft upon its very Self!
 No call, no song; but only flawless clarity of mind
 Above the clamor of the song and breath,
 Above the sense of self.

This eternal breathless sky of Mind
 Is the Source of breath and song;
 The seeker and the One who's sought
 Reveal that they are one.

* * *

5. Now, While There's Still Time

Now, while there's still time, call on God with a yearning heart!
 How swiftly passes this busy life of occupations and obligations.
 Too soon, the day is lost to inconsequential chores;
 Too soon the months, the years, are lost to scattered aims and fruitless schemes.

Suddenly we awake one morning, and we're old and feeble, unable to make any effort at all.

And who knows when the end will come?

You may be certain it will come one day —

Perhaps without warning, unannounced,

Perhaps while you walk, or sleep, or play;

Or in between the syllables of a word you start to say.

And when it comes, will your heart leap up and cry,

“O glorious day!”?

Or will you beg for just a little time to set things right—the way you'd always hoped they'd be?

O friend, make now your heart to be as you would have it then.

O now, my friend, while there's still time, call on God with a yearning heart!

Lead your soul to Him who is your true and everlasting home.

He is your joy unlimited, your boundless satisfaction;
Your Lord, your Goal, your Life, your Self.

* * *

6. When You Know Eternity

When you know Eternity, all becomes clear,
Just as when the ocean realizes it is not just a wave,
Or when the gold realizes it is not just a ring,
Or when life realizes it is not just a toad.
When you know Eternity, this little bubble of a universe
Is just a mind-born spectacle tossed out for fun.

When you know Eternity, you don't "see" Eternity; you *are* Eternity;
And you know that's who you've always been.
When you know Eternity, you are no longer a person in the world;
You are that secondless One alone.
But then, the world-illusion returns, like the mind
Slipping into a dream,
Like the sailing of a boat into fog.

Then, once more a person in a place on earth,
Once more ensnared in the illusory self,
Like the ocean reduced to a wave,
Eternity cries for its rightful and unlimited place.
Eternity once known, the world seems the bubble of a dream.
And how could Eternity delight in playing the clown,
Or in chasing illusory dreams?

And yet life goes on; the Dreamer lives on in the dream,
And plays out the complexity of His days.
While He moves and grows old in time's tedious pace,
He silently smiles in the heart of His heart,
And sings joy in the depths of His soul;
For His eye never drifts from the unchanging Face
Of His heavenly Father, His Self.

* * *

7. Song of Praise

O God, let me sing a song to Thee.
 I am just Thy foolish unworthy child, as Thou dost know;
 But I beg Thee, let me honor Thee with my song of praise.
 After all, I have no other reason for existing but to sing Thy praise.

O God, Thou art so far beyond my vision that I do not know how to begin to praise
 Thee.
 Thou art hidden beyond this world of my daily experience,
 invisible to my eye.
 But Thou hast shown Thyself to me when I was young.
 I know Thy perfect aloneness, untouched by all that transpires
 here below;
 I know Thy timeless face, Thy incomparable peace.
 Dear Lord, I can only stammer and write these miserably inadequate words; for no
 words are there to speak of Thee.
 All that flows from Thee bespeaks Thy bounty; but Thou art far greater than the
 sparkling sky, the star-filled cosmos.
 Thou art the emptiness from which all bounty flows;
 An emptiness that contains nothing yet gives being to everything.

As winds arise from air, as waves arise from the sea, as dreams arise from the
 quieted mind, so does the universe arise from Thee.

Thou art the bearer of happiness, the stirrer of devotion,
 the inventor of thought, surprise, and awe.
 Thou art the redeemer of error, the mother of love;
 Thou art the beauty of a summer's day.
 O God, whatever *is* is done by Thee.

But why should I remind Thee of Thy works?
 It's Thee, above all works, that I adore.
 I, who am Thy errant child, whose soul is birthed by Thee, and who longs to return
 to Thy womb, am nothing else but Thine.

Displayed into this world, I am Thy own substance, Thy own imagined form. And
 as I'm from Thee, so to Thee shall I return.

No longer image shall I be, but transformed into Thee,
 not something other, but Thee entire;
 One glowing I, unending, perfect beauty, perfect bliss, and consciousness absolute.

None of these words, of course, come close to saying what Thou art; though I
 searched, I could not find words that tell Thee truly.
 Down here, we have no words to describe what Thou art;
 and so, once more, my praise falls short.
 But we both know Thy true condition; we both know Thy unspeakable place of
 being; and we both know it is of that I speak.

Dear Father of my life, my thought, my love, please accept my pitiful attempt to
 praise Thee.
 Fault me not for my lack of words that tell Thee.
 Only grant that I may always love Thee, till I'm once again at home with Thee.

O dear God of Gods, hear my prayer! You know my heart, my heart's desire:
 I long to rise above this worldly self to bathe in Thy untroubled Life.
 I cannot do it, but only Thou canst bring me there to live in Thee.

O Lord, who art alone, sole Source
 And Master of the world, I beg Thee draw my mind and heart to Thee; let no other
 love distract me.
 Let no dreams or other goals detain me from my journey home to Thee.

* * *

8. The Life of a Self-Realized Man

O the life of a Self-realized man! It's much like yours, my friend;
 I feel the prick of ennui and suffer the ignorance of men;
 I know the annoying insistence of passions and the trickery of the brain;
 I endure the deterioration of the body and its attendant pains,
 And the requirements of providing bread for my table and a shelter for my head.
 Like you, I muddle through from day to day, and find a welcome refuge in my bed.
 I watch with hope this troubled world and see no end to pain.

But, O my friends, I've shared eternity with God;
 I've seen the infinite, eternal Self of all beyond this bubble of a world;
 And deep down know a peace and joy unsullied by this maudlin scene.

I merged into the heart of God and saw the universe explode in form,
 And then implode again, a breath-like cycle, endlessly repeated.
 I balanced, poised in mindless vision, in His still domain, at one with Him;
 And saw no separation or division, nor I or Thou, nor now or then.
 The pairs of opposites were no more, but canceled out
 In breathless heights of all-inclusive oneness;
 And I knew the everlasting Self of God as me, the only I who ever was.
 Though bound, like you, to worldly life, I'm free; my heart is calm and certain.
 I know the "I" beyond my role here in this paltry play;
 And when I exit from the stage, I'll still be I, backstage,
 The One who plays all roles, who lives to ply His art once more
 With plots, and lines, and costumes ever new.

And, even now, while taking in the very air you breathe,
 And walking on the very shores of time you walk,
 I breathe, as well, the light eternal and walk the hallowed skies.
 My heart imbibes the sweetest joy time's shadows can't obscure;
 And, like a man with either foot astride a threshold,
 I'm here, though I am there.
 I walk the world on tiptoe, with my head above the clouds;
 My eyes are fixed undeviatingly on God's perpetual smile.
 And, though you see me here with you, performing on the boards,
 I'm there, in God's unbounded bliss, my own eternal Self.

* * *

9. None Else

When you're drawn up to the One,
 You'll find yourself alone.
 There's no female at His side;
 No attending angels round about.
 There's no Son sitting nearby;
 And no congregation of saints standing there.

Even “He” is not there.
Only You are there.

Not this little form of you;
But You as you never knew you were,
A nothing Mind, containing all.
Nothing else is there but You.
There is no Shakti there but You;
There is no Shiva there but You.
Purusha as well as Prakriti are You.
The throngs of souls are You;
The powers that be are You.
Wherever You look,
You see none else but You.

“Alone at last!” You sigh.
If there is to be an ‘other’,
You must imagine him or her.
The universe you project is You;
And all the people in it are You.
There’s only ONE, and You are it.

The devotees who chant the name are You;
The universal choir of angels, You.
Whatever *is* is You, conjured by You.
There’s none else but You anywhere.
In such a lonely timeless life,
What else is there to do but dream
Up worlds and populate them
With imaginative forms caught up
In crazy, impossible plots and toils?

What else would You do
When there’s none else but You?

* * *

10. They Ask Me

They ask me, "How can man and God be one?
It makes no sense; it can't be understood."
I answer, "He is all, and all are He!
No other exists but Him; so, who are you?"

Becoming one with God is just the realization
Of what is and has always been true.
The self you think you are is only a mirage;
The Self you've always been is that eternal One.

We go about in our illusory shells,
Identifying with the dance of atoms,
A mere framework of form and ideas.
But only when He opens wide our inner eye
Is it revealed that we are Him and He is us.

This truth is not so easily perceived;
It's hidden by the power He wields.
And even when it's once revealed,
It's hard to hold; it slips away.

We pray, we concentrate our minds on Him,
And search our inner sky for that all-revealing Sun.
We shut out all distracting thoughts,
And open up our souls to Him.
Yet rarely does the clear light dawn
That shows our own eternal face.

More often we rely on thoughts inspired
That come to us as wisdom from on high.
Our prayers, our yearning hearts, uplift us
To that place where thought runs pure and clear;
And, in this way, we come to know His presence deep within.

But those who've gained His favor know a higher vision still;
His Grace reveals the truth of truths:

The Self of all is I!

They ask me, "How can man and God be one?"
 I ask them, "In the Unity that is His all-inclusive Self,
 How can you imagine there are two?
 If nothing else exists but God,
 Then who, on earth, are you?"

* * *

11. Do You Wish To Know God?

Do you wish to know God?
 Then pray for His grace. But even that you cannot do
 Until the magnet of His Love draws forth your heart's desire.

Do you wish to know God?
 That wish is God's own power alive within you drawing you home.
 But you must set your wings for flight and soar to heights unknown before,
 Releasing all below.

A strong and focused mind will be the wings on which you'll climb to His domain
 Where you may offer up your soul to Him and beg for entrance to His heart.

If you are steady in your goal, His heart will open wide
 and draw you in to make you one with Him.
 And then you'll know that you and He were never set apart.
 You'll see the universe in you; in you, the universal Self.

Your calling lifts you toward Him, but He responds only in His time.
 He will leave you yearning for His love, your heart an abject song.
 For He tortures those who love Him with a longing unfulfilled,
 And lures us on with sweetness, withholding His embrace.

What pathetic fools He makes of us who bargain all for Him,
 Who fill our nights with lonely pleas that He might hear our song!
 Addicts of His mercy, we pray He'll bring us home,
 And fold us in His sweet embrace as a father does a son.

No doubt, His mercy keeps us there in longing for His touch;
 Our hearts grow sweet, our love expands, as we call aloud His name;
 And lift our minds and hearts to Him, desiring only Him.
 This barb of sorrow, this aching love, upholds us in His grace,
 And leads us upward, onward, till one day we shall see His face.

O, who will take me to my Lord? Who will give me wings?
 I grow older, Father, every day, and my mind is growing dim.
 My eyes are weak, my vision strains to penetrate the dark.
 My Lord, I have no other goal but Thee; have mercy on this soul!

* * *

12. The Signature of Grace

Grace shows itself in the human heart as the quickening of love and sympathy.
 It glistens in the beholder's eye in the presence of sunlight streaming through the pines.

Have you known the quiet stilling of your breath
 In the silent sequesterment of night?
 Have you dreamed of a mysterious land where smiling sages
 Gaze at you in heaven's beauteous light?
 Have you longed to be free of the prison of the flesh?
 This is the signature of Grace.

Have you sought Him in prayer with a heartbroken plea?
 Have your tears poured torrents in longing for closeness to Him?
 Have you called on His name through each hour of the day?
 Have you waited for Him through the night?
 Does He haunt your heart like a lover who's lost?
 This is the signature of Grace.

Like a knife through the heart it painfully aches;
 It steals you from life's simple play.
 It makes a sameness of every fair shape, and leads you to quiet repose

And delight in the high-rising light-streams of thought.
 Have you heard His voice breaking through in the night
 As you sat watching and listening for Him?
 Has His love washed like waves through the desert of your soul? Have your tears
 drenched your cheeks as you sat in the dark?
 Has a white dove flown, fluttering, straight into your heart?
 This is the signature of Grace.

One sweet silent night He will lift up your mind to a height you have not before
 known;
 He will draw forth your soul from its naked pure depths, and open a deep inner
 eye.
 You'll see with His sight; you'll know with His knowing;
 You'll realize you are always His own.
 Like a wave on His ocean, you'll see who you are, and know that the ocean is you.
 He is your center, the Beloved you've sought, the very foundation of your soul.
 And He will reveal it; He'll heal all your doubts and lift you up to His heart.
 He'll thrill you with knowledge and reveal all His art.
 For this is the signature of Grace.

* * *

13. The Two In One

Look, the Source is one and all that is;
 But It has imaged forth within Itself a second: this cosmic array.
 Eternally the one great Mind exists alone;
 Its universal picture-show comes and goes,
 An image on the screen of time.

Eternally, even as the stars play out their birth and death,
 The One is undiminished, undivided, undismayed.
 For, since the universal drama exists within the one great Mind,
 There is no separation, no duality at all.

And yet, while we live and dance in time and space,
 We inhabit an imaginary bubble of non-eternity,
 Of transient bodies and volitional activities,
 A secondary world, unreal.

For “real”, by definition, refers only to the Permanent,
 The Eternal, the Mind unmanifest and clear.
 So, what is this unseemly show, this conjured art,
 This Mind-dreamt castle-in-the-air
 In which we’re sentenced to abide?

Alas, it’s smoke and mirrors, a magic show,
 Of no account, unworthy of note.
 For the fact is we’ve never left our eternal realm;
 We delight there even now.

The timeless Self we know as “we” was never
 Imprisoned in a bodily shell;
 That’s but an illusion, a paltry spell that binds us
 To the dream of separate personality.

Once freed of duality’s deception,
 We realize we’ve never left eternity’s bliss.
 We’re one unparcelled Self, unbound, unsnared forever,
 Complete in the completion of the boundless One,
 A “we”, an “I” that stands triumphantly free, beyond imagined time.

* * *

14. Song of Thanksgiving

Hari, my love, I wish to sing to Thee a song of Thanksgiving.
 Yet, O how I dread the futile search for meaningful words to offer Thee!
 My heart is full of thanks and praise for each breath that is granted me,
 But to speak reveals the lie of pretended two-ness that I must tell.
 For Thou art my breath, my voice, the Real; and I am but the image;
 I live by Thy uncommon Life, imaged in Thy dream of me.
 And yet my gratitude to Thee upwells, as an image in a mirror
 Might admire its own source, its real and original Face;

Or as a dream character might call out praise to its dreaming Self.

Though we are one, not two, I'll speak as though we're separate and apart;
For how else might I truly speak to Thee?

O Hari, Thou art alone, undiminished by the clatter and glitter
Of a billion billion images, mere reflections in a house of mirrors;
For Thou art alike the house, the mirrors, and the flitting images as well.
This speaking too is like the barking of a dog in an empty field;
For, though it may be heard, the silence of the cosmos remains unbroken.
Yet I, this imagined form, am present—at least in appearance;
And because I'm here, please let me speak to Thee in loving thanks.

O Hari, look how wonderful is this story Thou dost tell!
Look how beautiful is this body and the life ensouled.
Though all too quickly it will turn to dust, this form is Thine
And holds Thy greatness and Thy holy light and breath of life.
Thou, this brightly glowing wakeful knowing;
Thou, this deep and endlessly creative song of light and love
That bubbles up from Thy unfathomable depths
Within the soul of me to greet each day with joyful thanks.

O Hari, from Thy eternal Goodness and unknowable Repose,
Thou hast issued forth this universe of man and beast
With purpose known only to Thy own delight;
And Thou hast given Thy own thoughts to guide us from within
To bring us happily, through adventures great and small,
To our end in Thy boundlessly blissful Self.
O Hari, it is a most wonderful and admirable drama
Thou hast produced, full of harrowing dilemmas,
Frightful predicaments, and uproarious denouements!

Yet, in the end, we all awake to know one Self,
The Dreamer of this dream, our ever-undisturbed Reality.
Always unperturbed, Thou art forever untouched by time,
As the patient sky is ever untouched by passing clouds;
We are where we have always been in truth, never separated
From our constantly enfolding, ever undivided Self;
Where all the fervent lives o'erpassed, like dreams,
Once left behind in waking, hastily retreat from view,

Revealed as the flimsiest of transient illusions.

In waking, we are one in Thee, O Hari!
 And in Thee, *as* Thee, we have always been.
 Never imprisoned as we thought in separate forms,
 Once reawakened from our dreams, we know our
 Ever-undivided and eternal Identity as Thee.
 In blissful folds of snow-white radiant Eternity
 We rest as Thee in peaceful oneness and joy;
 But while I live in pretended separation from Thyself,
 Let me now offer my song of grateful thanks to Thee,
 Who art the Life that lives me, my secret pride and joy;
 For it is Thou who hast made Thyself as me.

Dear Father, all that Thou hast made is good,
 And all Thy beauteous forms sing praise and thanks to Thee.
 Then, let me uplift my voice in song as well
 To glorify in praise my gracious Lord:
 O Hari, all praise be to Thee in Thy heavenly glory!
 All praise be to Thee in Thy universal pageantry of form!
 My head is bowed in loving thanks and worship,
 Knowing Thou art all and more than all.
 Thy grace to me is beyond what my voice can tell;
 I can but offer thanks, with hands held high, to Thee,
 My ever kind and gracious Lord.

* * *

15. Where Are You Now?

He did not come into the world; there was no world.
 He didn't come into the space; there was no space.
 He invented space and the world with a great "woosh!"
 And then a roaring fountain of light that spread out
 Like porridge spilt by an invisible Chef on high.
 Where are you now? Do you know? Look about!

He invented time to spread out the cooking of his masterpiece.
 He invented space to accommodate time.
 And the fountain of His light danced into lively forms

To worship Him with love.
 Do you court Him in the light? Do you fly to Him at dusk?
 Do you see the scattering particles of His love forming your world?
 Where are you now? Do you know? Look about!

* * *

16. Plato's Cave

I lay in chains like all the rest, but even in my youth
 I sought a way beyond this gloomy labyrinthine cave.
 I'd heard the legends of a land of light, and one day
 Broke my chains and began my search, exploring paths
 Both dark and narrow where very few had gone before.

Alone, I felt my way through winding passageways,
 Leading always upwards toward a dim but beckoning light;
 And at last broke free, all unexpectedly bathed in light.
 For suddenly, as though lifted on a wind divine,
 I was elevated to a heavenly plane
 Where I was not the man I'd been before.
 The life I'd known beneath the surface,
 Where only darkness reigned, was but a distant memory;
 As now I beheld a glorious radiance of white engulfing me
 And into which I blent.

No flickering fires, no shadowed walls, nor separate
 Dancing figures differentiated here; for all was
 One free vastness irradiated from above
 And bright with clarity so intense I saw for miles
 An endless horizon spreading everywhere at once.

In breathless awe I took it in, marveling at the breadth
 And scope of this unexpected land to which I'd come,
 And breathed the light-filled air so sweet and pure.

There, the very earth was mine and all the starry heavens;
 And I was at the center, still, containing all.
 I had become the one great light,

Begetting and illuminating every thing and beast;
There was no other to behold, as all combined in me.

And all was perfect everywhere,
Moving toward its perfect end.
No trace of self remained, but only this one eternal Beauty
I beheld shining endlessly in all.

How expansive was the freedom that I felt!
How flawless my delight!
I saw with intimate clarity Eternity's joy-filled peace,
And witnessed the breath-like ebb and flow
Of cosmic birth and death.
For, somehow, I was made to see that all revolved in me;
That I was part and whole, and yet was much, much more:
The still, unchanging eye unbound by time
That watched while time unfurled its transient array.

How long I stood there I cannot know;
Lost in vision's trance, I clung with all my power
To the tenuous gift of sight.
But thoughts rushed back to pull me down,
And I descended from the whiteness into dark once more.
My mind descended once again to self and those I'd left
Still struggling in the darkened cave,
Still unimagining what bright place lay just above.

I vowed to tell them all what place I'd found and how
They too might rise above their dungeon-life below.
That such a place existed was still unknown to all;
That life held so much more of joy and light
And endless vision none had dared to dream.
And soon I found myself returned to the world I'd known,
Below, unlit, where only artificial shadows produced the show.

And yet, sustained within my mind was what I'd seen above;
And it was this which fired my blood
And brought to these familiar scenes illumination
From my memory's so newly acquired delight.

And as I went among the dreary folk,
 My eyes still brightened by the light I'd found,
 I told them of my discovered land, and of the brightness there,
 And how I'd made my way by following the upward trail.

But none believed me. I was an embarrassment
 To friends and family who thought I'd lost my mind.
 "That's very interesting", they said; "And now it's time for lunch".
 While others said, "Everyone has their own ideas, you know;
 I have my own beliefs as well."
 And so, I learned to keep my knowledge to myself, and spend
 My quiet hours alone, remembering where I'd been.

And even now, my heart is drawn there still!
 My eyes, still filled with vision of the light I'd seen,
 Were unaccustomed now to dark;
 And though I tried to focus on the customary tasks
 Incumbent on the dwellers here below,
 I could not wholly give myself to thoughts
 And purposes of men enslaved,
 Nor take delight in shadows playing on the walls.

My briefly tasted freedom rendered me unfit
 For chains and games that others loved;
 My heart was up above.
 And so, they ask, "What benefit did you derive from your escape?
 You journeyed there, or so you say,
 And what have you gained but blindness and disdain
 For what all men hold dear?"

I have no answer to these taunts. I only know that I have gone
 Where I was meant to go, and saw a world
 More real, more glorious than this shadowed one below.
 I've known the joyful promise which my soul desired;
 I reached the goal, the source of joy and light.
 And, though I'm here among the rest, I stand there still,
 Immersed in light, delighting in the far-flung landscape that I saw.
 For in my heart my home is there; I'll live there evermore.

* * *

17. Why We Were Born

The Jews are praising Thee, Lord;
 The Christians and Muslims are busy praising Thee as well.
 The Hindus and the Sikhs, the Platonists and the Taoists
 also sing Thy praise.
 The farmers tilling the land have no other goal but to give
 praise to Thee;

Even the men and women of science, who hope to ferret out
 Thy secrets,
 Are engaged unwittingly in praising Thee.
 For no one on this earth of Thine can find satisfaction
 In anything other than Thy praise.
 What other purpose might we have, O Lord?
 Why else were we born? Why else would we live
 But to joy in giving praise and glory to Thee?

* * *

18. God, Being So Close

God, being so close, is easily accessible to us;
 He is always within the reach of our call,
 Always ready to provide succor in our need,
 And the light of wisdom in our times of darkness.
 Our own soul is the conduit of this accessibility,
 This communication, this succor and this wisdom.
 In our own soul, when the chattering of the mind is silenced,
 And all our attention is focused on His presence,
 There He is found in the very qualities of the soul;
 For we are rays from His brilliance,
 Diminished only by our hesitance
 To manifest His light.

He is the air in our nostrils and the earth under our feet.
 He is the light of our eyes and the music in our breast.
 He is the bright awareness that lives as you,
 And He is the storied tale your living tells.
 You dance in His firelight; you float on His sea.
 You breathe by His breathing; you move by His joy.

No matter how far you may gaze into the rolling
 Galaxies cascading above;
 No matter what dark or clownish scenes you dream,
 Or terrestrial landscapes you cross;
 In the depths of the ocean, or on the chilly
 Snow-peaked mountains;
 And even in the abyss of death and darkness,
 You are ever within His close embrace.
 You cannot leave Him, nor scamper from His sight.
 For you are in Him as a fish is in the ocean
 Or a bird is in the sky.
 His love surrounds and holds you,
 And He sees all through your eyes.

* * *

19. No One Ever Enlightened Himself

No one ever enlightened himself,
 Though many have taken credit for the feat.
 He gave you that brief glimpse, didn't He?
 You did nothing to bring it about;
 It was all His doing, all His grace.
 And now you hold classes to teach others
 How to become enlightened. What a scam!
 In His time, unscheduled by you,
 He lit up your mind, parting the ego-veil.
 You saw—as far as He allowed you to see,
 Revealing that all is His own, all is in Him.

He allowed you to see with His eyes,
 So you could say: "All this is me!"
 But then the old 'you' came back, and now
 You try in vain to lift your vision
 To that holy inside view.
 Reform your heart, my friend!
 There's no other way, no other key, to that door.

* * *

20. Evolution

How does an invisible all-inclusive Mind
 Create a vast shower of light within itself?
 How does a human mind create a multitude
 Of thoughts within itself?
 Who can answer these questions?
 The divine Mind has this power.
 The human mind has this power.
 Who can explain it?

The divine manifestation of light miraculously
 Transforms itself into visible forms—
 As stars, and planets, and creatures
 Crawling on their surfaces.
 Who can explain that?
 Is it a production of His thought—
 A vast panorama of imagination
 Taking place within that Mind?
 And what role do we serve
 In the purpose of this play?

There is an evolution at work here—
 Have no doubt!
 Did you think you were only here to screw
 And fill your belly with the meat of the dead?
 To accumulate comforts and make a name
 For yourself in this world?

Whether you like it or not, you'll evolve.
 You'll grow a little each time you
 Enter into this world, and you'll
 Throw off many an illusion
 Before your journey's done.

All in good time. This Mind's in no hurry
 To bring this drama to a close at once.
 The drama's denouement is long and slow.
 And the progress of your story depends on you—
 On how quickly you learn and heed the clues.
 Pay attention now: He's leading you to knowing
 That He is you and you are Him.
 The dreamer and the dream: one unending Self,
 One all-containing Mind, your secret identity.

And when you wake to know that Self,
 Your journey will be done.
 The story's written, the end's assured;
 But that end is not yet come.
 There's much yet to do and learn.
 Much yet to know and be.
 Much yet to suffer and earn.
 Keep up the good work!
 You're doing fine.

* * *

21. Within His Own Mind

At the highest octave of His Consciousness,
 The One remains whole, unmoved, inactive and unmanifest;
 It is only His lower Mind that acts,
 That manifests a vast universe of forms,
 And permeates the universe that He creates.

Within His own Mind, He creates a universe of Light;

And every particle of that universe is filled with His Consciousness
 By virtue of its presence within His Mind.
 And so, in harmony with His ever-present Will,
 All things move together of one accord;
 Assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.

Because He is the living presence within His Mind-born universe,
 He emerges within the material forms as animate life and awareness,
 And, little by little, He leads His creatures to self-reflection,
 And eventually to likeness with Himself.
 Then, when His creatures are fully prepared,
 He reveals Himself within them as their origin and indwelling self,
 Their very life and awareness;
 And He brings them to completion in the knowledge that they are none else but
 Him,
 That He alone comprises all that is.

Again and again, He leads His creatures
 To this wonder and amazement, their ultimate prize;
 And when this solitary game of hide-and-seek is complete,
 He takes a rest,
 And then He begins it all once again. What fun!

* * *

22. A Sense of Me

We know that we are grounded in and supported by God; we know
 That He is the eternal Reality underlying our very existence,
 And yet, in our minds we seem to be something other: a sense of 'me'
 Who walks this earth in multitudes with its own separate will.
 And even though we know that God is our own higher Self, and not
 Separate from us, each 'me' is filled with an innate love for Him,
 As though He were something other than our own Self.
 We long to be enfolded in His embrace, to unite our awareness
 With His far greater awareness, but we can't do it without His grace.
 And so, day and night we lament that He so seldom reveals Himself,
 Though He knows full well that our only delight and desire is to know Him,

To see the light of His eternal day and merge into His all-revealing light.

But be assured: He will not always remain hidden!
 One not too distant day or night He will still our breath,
 And our minds will become absorbed in Him alone;
 And whatever this thing called 'me' is will disappear in one
 Unending conscious light, and we will know in fullest clarity
 That, all along, it was only Him, the one never-ending light,
 Who walked this earth pretending to be 'me'.

* * *

23. God's Love

Love is born of God and may rest in nothing less than God.
 For we see that all *worldly* love is but one half of an inseparable pair,
 And we recall with gladness that God's love has no contrary;
 For He is the One in whom all opposites merge,
 The One whose love never wanes.

Search this earth and through all the galaxies, you'll find
 Nothing truly worthy of love but God. For all else is lovable
 Only to the degree that it is reflective of Him.
 Let not your love, therefore, settle on anything or anyone but Him.
 For He alone is the source of joy, the Giver of wisdom and satisfaction,
 The final destination of all the heart's desires,
 And the source and resting place of every wandering soul.

* * *

24. The Object of Our Love

Everyone knows that the form is transient and impermanent, while the essence is unchanging and everlasting. We see this clearly as we note the inevitable changes in our own bodies and note as well the constancy of our inner divinity as we age. And yet, it seems that in our popular culture we tend to value the individual over the universal essence of which the individual is but a form. We proudly announce our love for this or that particular person, though the truth is that who we are in love with is God, manifest in the form of a human being. It is only God's beauty that attracts us and fills us with love and longing. If we attribute that lovability to the individual person, we are soon disillusioned and disappointed, as the beauty and perfection of which we have become enamored sadly turns out to be marred by human imperfection and is subject to old age, death and dissolution. Therefore, we must acknowledge that it is God's eternal beauty that we have fallen in love with, for He alone is capable of inspiring our love and He alone is worthy of being the object of our love.

In our popular culture, we sing false and ludicrous love songs to this or that individual person; yet, how quickly the song of 'I love you' turns into a song of 'goodbye'! Every individual person and every person's heart is subject to infidelity and change, while God, whose beauty and goodness inspires our love, remains always perfect and unchanged. So, we must not be fooled by appearances; the love that God's beauty has inspired in us cannot be satisfied with the possession of any of His transient human forms. For it is only in His eternal Being, unformed and unmanifest, that His beauty and His perfection remain forever, and it is only in His unformed and eternal Being that He can be eternally possessed and loved. Then, let us continually sing aloud His praise, for He is in fact the beloved, the lover, and the love as well. Filling all, and beguiling all, He remains the one constant source and object of love in every heart.

* * *

--End of Songs In Praise of God--

6. The Ascent of The Soul (2012)

The Egyptian-born Roman mystic-philosopher, Plotinus (205-270 C.E.) was one of the greatest seers of the nature of the soul. Plotinus had experienced “the vision of God”, had ascended in awareness to the transcendent Ground, the absolute Self; and he described in his writings the ascent from body consciousness to God consciousness. He asserts that, in the manifestation of this universe, consciousness moves downward toward limitation, from the One to the Divine Mind to Soul to body (or matter); and it has the power and strong inclination to rise once again from body to Soul to Divine Mind to the eternal One. Consciousness, according to Plotinus, is on a graduated scale from God to matter, from matter to God. We are not separated from God; we live in a continuum (or spectrum) of consciousness, where the pure Consciousness of God rests at a higher, but accessible octave. On that variable scale of Consciousness, we may know ourselves as an individualized soul at one moment, and as the undifferentiated Source at another.

From the standpoint of the human experience, the various levels of our being are not clearly separated off from one another with clear demarcations to indicate where one ends, and another begins, but these levels tend to merge one into the other in a gradual and vaguely perceived manner. We are aware of being identified with one or another level of Being according to the activities which follow upon it. When we are identified with the physical body, we are operating almost solely through our senses, and we find our gratification in things of sense. When we identify with the mental realm, we are conscious of the inner play of random thoughts and images, and we delight in the play of thought. When we ascend a bit to the intellectual realm, we identify with the critical intelligence which discriminates, censures, and deliberates; thereby elevated in concentration above the rambling mind, we take pleasure in the clarity of discernment. Above this intellect, we experience our soul—at its lower level the repository of our karma, and at its higher level the bearer not only of our highest moral directive and purpose, but the driving impetus guiding us toward our own Source with a heartfelt longing, like that of a moth to a flame. The soul is drawn to the Light within it¹ and looks, not below to the realm of mental activity or the realm of sense, but above toward the Divine whence it comes.

Plotinus asserts that man, as an evolute of the One, contains within himself all levels of manifestation, from the absolute Unity to the creative Energy, to the soul, to mind, and finally to the gross physical body; and is capable of returning in

consciousness to his Origin. It is in relation to man that this out-flowing radiance from subtle to gross is described in the Eastern yogic tradition as well. Man, who is at his center the unqualified Self (*Atman*, or *Brahman*), manifests from the supracausal (*Turiya*), to the causal (*Prajna*), to the subtle or astral (*Taijasa*), and lastly as the gross physical body (*Vishva*). Soul, for Plotinus, is an outpouring of the Divine Mind, a living radiance which fills the cosmos and manifests as individual souls.

The levels of human reality, from the gross physical body inward, have been variously named and described; and in all true metaphysical systems the primary teaching has been that one is able to reach to and experience that Self by way of the inner journey only, seeking it by way of self-examination, purification, contemplation and selfless devotion. Self-examination reveals to us that we are more than the physical body with which the immature consciousness identifies. We are more than the effusive mind with which some others identify; more than the intellect which reasons and oversees the mind; more than the individual soul which evolves from lifetime to lifetime. The purification of the soul occurs through the grace of God, causing the soul to desire only God; and the absence of all other desires *is* the soul's purification, leading it naturally to contemplation and selfless devotion.

From the perspective of those who have experienced it, the ascent of consciousness occurs, quite unexpectedly in a moment of concentrated awareness focused inwardly. The individual soul ascends to what Plotinus calls the "All-Soul," all the while drawn on by its inherent thirst to know its Source. When it comes inwardly to a perfect, concentrated stillness, it emerges from its time-bound isolation as an individual creature and awakes to its participation in the consciousness of an all-inclusive creative Power. And yet above that creative Power, at a yet subtler stage of consciousness, it knows itself as the eternal One from which the creative Power takes its origin. It knows this, not as an object is known to a knowing subject, but as the subject's own primary and eternal Identity.

The soul, seeking God, scans the inner darkness, as though to discover another, as though awaiting something external to itself to make its presence known. But as the concentration focuses within, the mind becomes stilled, and suddenly the seeking soul awakes. No external has made its appearance; it is the soul itself, no longer soul, which knows itself to be the All, the One. Like a wave seeking the ocean, the seeker discovers that it is, itself, what it sought. Through contemplation and selfless devotion to that highest Self, we discover that we are the Life in all

life, the integrated Whole of which all manifest creatures and things are a part. And, at last we awake to the supremely ultimate Identity, knowing ourselves as the one Light of existence, the Source of all manifestation, the one God who is the true Self of all, and from Whom all else follows.

Those who have experienced the union of their souls with the Divine Mind experience themselves no longer as individual separate identities, but rather as ideational wave-forms on the one integral ocean of Cosmic Energy. They no longer identify with the composite of body, mind, and soul, but know themselves as having their real identity in the entire undivided ocean of creative Energy in and on which these temporary forms manifest. The conscious awareness focused on this clear vision of the subtler level of its own reality then moves forward, as one moving through a fog comes to a clearing where the fog is no more, to the ultimate and final level of subtlety, the Divine Source, the Unmanifest. Then, it knows the pure unqualified Consciousness that is the Father, the One, prior even to the creative Power which acts as creator; and it knows, "I and the Father are one."

From that vantage point in Eternity one sees one's own creative Power manifesting all that has manifest existence in a cycle of creation and dissolution. There is a bursting forth, just as the spreading rays of the Sun burst out from their source, and then a returning to that source in a cyclic repetition, much as the cycle of the breath's inhalation and exhalation. One witnesses this from that transcendent vantage point, aware of one's Self as the Eternal One, totally unaffected and unaltered by the expansion and contraction of the out-flowing creative Force—as a man might watch the play of the breath or the imagination without being at all affected by its rise and fall. That One is the final irreducible Reality, and It is experienced as identity. Nothing could be more certain than the fact that It is who one really is, always was, and always will be.

NOTES:

1. "From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things, and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all." (from Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Over-Soul", *The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Tudor Publishing Co., p. 174).

7. Japa: The Remembrance of God
(from *The Wisdom of Vedanta*, 1991; rev. 10-5-14)

One who has been granted the “vision” of the absolute Reality, who has realized the absolute Truth, knows without the least doubt that everything that exists is nothing but God (the Self). He has no more need of philosophical theories about the nature of reality; he has seen that it is God (the Self) who exists as the very consciousness that lives and experiences as ‘I,’ and it is God (the Self) who exists as every perceivable form. In other words, He is, in every case, the subject; and He is, in every case, the object.

Naturally, those people who have not been graced with the realization of this truth identify solely with the individual perspective, which they possess as perceiver, and regard all that they perceive as something other than themselves. But, say the seers, the expounders of Vedanta, it is the one eternal Consciousness who is manifesting as the subject, and it is that same Consciousness who is manifesting as the phenomena that we perceive as the objective world. Everything is God (the Self)—both the subject and the object. It is He who is the witness of the universal play, and it is He who provides that universal drama from His own creative imagination. He projects Himself as Energy-in-form, and then lives within His creation as the many individual subjects who experience that world of forms through their senses.

The subject-object relationship is most evident to us in our perception of objects in the external world, but it is just as operative, though in a subtler way, in our perception of internal phenomena—such as thoughts, images, reveries, etc. Ordinarily, we do not think of such phenomena as “objective” occurrences because they are so ephemeral and insubstantial. Also, because they occur within our minds, we tend to view them as part of the “subjective” reality. Strictly speaking, however, the subjective “I,” the witness-Self, is pure, unqualified Consciousness; clear, unblemished Awareness. Thoughts, images, dreams, etc., as they arise, are projected from that pure Consciousness and appear upon that conscious Screen as “objective” phenomena. Thus, on this subtle, mind-level, the witness-Self, which is the true subject, experiences mental phenomena as the “objects” of perception.

The pure Consciousness, or witness-Self, is the only subject; and all that is perceived, both on the subtle and on the gross sensual level, is the object. This apparent duality of subject and object constitutes all experience. Without this apparent separation between the two, no experience would be possible. However,

we must never lose sight of the fact that this duality is *apparent* only; and that God and the world, the experiencing Self and the experienced phenomena, is a Unity still. This is the ever-recurring theme of Vedanta, also known as the philosophy of *Advaita*, or “Nondualism.” For, while it admits to an apparent duality existing between the immortal Self and the world-appearance, as between the individual awareness and the activity of the mind, it does not acknowledge an actual duality. There is nothing that is not God: this is the watchword of Vedanta. From this, it clearly follows that *tat tuam asi*, “That thou art.”

However, even though we may know with certainty that this is true, we may continue to identify with our own unique perspective from the standpoint of our own embodied soul. To explain what the soul is, we may compare it with a wave on the ocean, which identifies with its wave-form and not with the entire ocean. From its isolated perspective, it is, of course, a unique wave, separate from all other waves; but when that wave comes to know its own nature, it will realize that it is only a manifestation of the ocean, which has never really divided its identity into separate waves. We too, like waves on the ocean, continue to identify with our separate make-believe identity as the “soul.” When true realization comes, it will know that it was never anything but God, and that no *permanent* “soul” ever existed. Nonetheless, while it has the semblance of existence, it cries out in longing for God, and seeks Him as though, instead of being the subject, He were an object to be attained.

The truth is that, whether we seek Him as the ever-present subject, “I,” or as the ever-present object, “Thou,” we must seek Him beyond the puny ego of individual personality, in the silence of a keen and clear intelligence. For it is only in the upper reaches of concentrated intelligence, in the rarefied atmosphere reached only by a soaring mind, uplifted on the draft of Grace, that He is found. In truth, He is both subject and object; it is He who plays both of these parts. It is He who calls out to Himself, and it is He who answers, “See, I have always been here as the greater you!”

The man of knowledge, identifying with the One, speaks of being aware of the Self; and the man of devotion, identifying with the soul, speaks of remembering God. But the pure sky of Consciousness whom the man of knowledge calls the Self is the same eternal Consciousness whom the devotee calls God. One identifies himself with that pure Consciousness and calls it “I”; the other regards It as other than himself and calls It “Thou.” But both are setting their eyes toward the same eternal One.

And though the man of knowledge may speak of being aware of the Self, there is no awareness of the Self, for the Self *is* awareness. And the devotee who speaks of remembering God is likewise defeated, for God is quite beyond the comprehension of the intellect or the conception of the imagination or the vision of memory. And to love God is also paradoxical, as God is that very love we feel. These are instances of the difficulty of applying a language that requires a subject, verb, and object to a Unity in which these are all the same.

It is possible, however, to lift the individual soul to the awareness of God in the unitive vision through an intense aspiration, which utilizes “reminders” as rungs on the ladder leading to mental clarity and higher consciousness. Such reminders may take the form of prayer, the reading of devotional works, the singing of hymns of love, or the mental repetition of a name, which brings to the mind of the individual the awareness of God. These lift the consciousness from its limited individual perspective to a Divine perspective from which all is seen as it truly is, as God.

The mental repetition of the name of God is the highest form of prayer; it is prayer reduced to its essence. It is concentrated aspiration and love-longing minus all the self-serving guile of petitionary prayer.

A mind focused on a *mantra*, a single word-symbol of God, is a mind reduced to one-pointedness. It is just such fervent single-mindedness, which is capable of supplanting the normally scattered flow of worldly thoughts, leaving in its stead a calm and focused awareness, empty of thought, full of peace and bliss. And because it is so simple and so effective a method of emptying the mind of its contents, and directing the flow of awareness inward upon itself, it is one which has been highly recommended by numerous sages and saints from all variety of religious traditions over the centuries.

There is, of course, no end to the number of names that may be given to God, who is the absolute Existence in which we live. And each one has the power to focus the mind upon its conscious Source. All that is needed is a sweet fondness for that particular name and a true and sincere love for Him whom that name signifies. There are those who have extolled the name of “Rama,” or “Krishna,” or “Karim,” or “Adonai”; all these names are holy, for it is the same One who is signified by each.

In the following Song in praise of the practice of reciting the Name of God, the name used is “Hari.” As a familiar appellation for Vishnu, or His manifestation, Krishna, it refers to God as the adorable Beloved, “the stealer of hearts.” Here in this Song of twenty-five verses, Eknath Maharaj extols the practice of singing the name of Hari and elaborates upon its benefits. However, before the Song itself, I’d like to tell you just a little about its author, Eknath Maharaj:

Eknath lived from 1548 to 1609 C.E. When he was still a young boy, he heard a voice speaking to him in his meditation, which said, “Go to Devgiri Fort!” Now, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, this Fort had been a glorious castle, the center of a great kingdom, but now it was merely ruins. And when Eknath went there and searched among the ruins, he found living there the man who was to become his Guru, whose name was Janardan Swami. Under the tutelage of Janardan, Eknath became a great yogi, and later wrote many wonderful works.

One day, during his adult years, while he was meditating, Eknath saw in his meditation a vision of Jnaneshvar, a great saint who had lived three centuries before him in the same region. Jnaneshvar, who had entered his tomb alive at the age of twenty-five, was seen in this vision sitting in his tomb at Alandi, where a root from a nearby tree had encircled his neck and was choking off the prana in his still-living body.

Acting on this meditative vision, Eknath dug into the tomb and found Jnaneshvar just as he had envisualized him. He loosened the root and removed it from around the saint’s throat. And while he was in the tomb, he took the manuscript of Jnaneshvar’s famous book, *Jnaneshvari*, which had been buried with him, and brought the book back to the light of day. In Eknath’s time, the words of this great book had been corrupted by various transcribers, and so Eknath brought forth the authentic *Jnaneshvari* to serve as the authority. This is a true story.

Eknath went on to write some wonderful books on the true realization of God; this little book of Songs written by him is called *Haripatha*, or “Sing The Name Of God.” Others before him, including Jnaneshvar himself, had written such a collection of verses with the same title; here, then is Eknath’s version of the oft-repeated call to remember God by singing His name continually within the heart:

Haripatha
 (“Sing The Name Of God”)
 by Eknath

1. In the eyes of Hari’s servant, God is everywhere;
 We can see Him by our love and faith.
 To put an end to all distress,
 Sing Hari’s name, and be released from birth and death.

Rebirth results from clinging to the world;
 The devotees of Hari cling to Him alone.
 Dissolved in Hari, they lose the sense of “I”;
 Where only one remains, both “I” and “Thou” are gone.

Says Eknath, “Remember Hari; meditate on Him!
 Always be aware of Hari; sing aloud His name.”

2. Sing Hari’s name, or else be still;
 Don’t chatter and gossip—give up your pride.
 Find joy in surrender of “I” and “Thou”;
 Your joy will then bring peace to all,
 And lead the lost to the righteous path.
 He who walks God’s path with love and faith
 Will not be caught in the snare of the world.
 Says Eknath, “I have unmistakably seen the Lord;
 He’s everywhere before my eyes.
 I see Him when I’m in a crowd as well as when I’m alone.”

5. That mouth is a rat-hole, which does not sing the name;
 That tongue is a viper that lives therein.
 That unscented speech is the shriek of a witch;
 That life is accursed. In hell suffering awaits.
 Not wife, or wealth, or children, but only Hari, can save you.

In your final journey, you’ll travel alone;
 Therefore, while living, seek the company of the saints;
 Through such company, you’ll at last be united with God.

Says Eknath, “These two syllables, *Ha* and *ri*,

Have saved millions; it is this I continually sing.”

6. Blessed is that mother whose child loves the name;
Such love is the fruit of good deeds in past lives.
In a life without God, what good fruit can there be?
The whole essence of Vedanta is in *Ha* and *ri*.
This song of God’s name is sufficient to man;
Not yoga, nor *yajna* (ritual), nor *puja* (worship) does he need.

The cream of *sadhana* is the singing of the name;
Says Eknath, “All is accomplished by singing Hari!
He who sings the name is ever-free, a knower of Brahman;
Therefore, sing Hari! Hari!”

7. Your human body is the reward of good deeds,
But unless it’s used to increase love for God,
Alas, O man, it will totter to doom.
O fool, learn the secret of extinguishing all karma,
And thus hasten the dawn of your unending good.

Your fervent desire to sing the Divine name
Is the reward you have earned from your countless past lives.
Whether a king or a beggar, a prince or a thief,
He who does not fill his mouth with the name [of God] fills it with dust.
Says Eknath, “Sing Hari; Liberation will come!”

8. One who sips Divine nectar by singing the name
Will view Liberation as a very small thing.
That home where the sound of the Divine name is heard
Is the city of Kashi, the holiest ground.
Even Varanasi must crumble one day,
But the name of God will forever resound.

Thousands of creatures come and go in a wink;
The Lord’s devotees enjoy watching this play.
Says Eknath, “So many have lived and died in this world;
But he alone is blessed who resorts to the name.”

11. To learn the true knowledge, to unlearn what is false,

The true Teacher's guidance and grace is required.
 The lovers of God's form then attain to the Formless;
 Do not doubt this, O man; your tongue may fall out.

When an actor, disguised as a beggar, receives alms,
 It's the actor who receives what the beggar is given.
 In the same way, the love which is offered to the form
 Is received by the Formless, the God-beyond-form.
 Says Eknath, "I've perceived that both the form and the Formless
 Are the play of the Lord."

12. Can one who's seen Hari and enthroned Him within
 Ever be touched by sorrow or pain?
 Though that lover may have had an unsavory past,
 By singing the Divine name, his life is made pure.

One who sings every day the holy name of God,
 Brings blessings upon his parents and family as well.
 But those whose minds are reeking of lust, anger and greed
 Cannot reap the full fruit of singing the name.
 Says Eknath, "The singing of the name is my secret:
 I've revealed it to you; now please sing Hari's name!"

13. Sing Hari when you give, and Hari when you get;
 Sing Hari when you're happy, and Hari when you play.
 Sing Hari when you're chanting, while you eat, and
 while you work;
 Sing Hari when you're by yourself; sing Hari in a crowd.
 Sing loudly Hari's name when you find you're in a brawl;
 When your life is giving out, sing Hari's name aloud.
 Sing Hari when you're pounding grain,
 When you sit, and when you rise.
 Says Eknath, "In the forest, or in the marketplace—
 Wherever you may be, keep singing Hari's name!"

14. The universe is made of three, five, twenty-five,
 Or even thirty-six Principles, they say.
 How many branches, I don't know; but Hari is the root!

“*Jiva* (the soul) is only Shiva’s *Maya*,” so they say.
 These *jivas* are only wavelets on the ocean of Hari.
 Oyster-shell appears as silver, a rope seems to be a snake;
 Yet “silver” and “snake” are illusions;
 Both the subject and the object are Hari.
 Says Eknath, “The crown of wisdom is bestowed
 On the one who sings loudly the name of Hari!”

15. By the power of his imagination, a man creates goals;
 Then, seeking to attain them, he forgets his Lord.
 He may attain those goals on which his heart dwells,
 Yet attaining those goals can never bring peace.
 Yearn for a goal that’s nearby: Hari’s feet.
 Then Hari will grant you whatever you wish.
 Until the knot of imagination is untied,
 Hari will stay away; birth and death will go on.
 Says Eknath, “I’ve found it—the secret of Hari:
 Even my imagination has become one with Him.”

16. Can an impotent man appreciate the charms of a girl?
 Can a woman who is barren appreciate what childbirth is like?
 A lamp to a blind man,
 Or fragrant sandal-paste to a mule,
 Or milk to a serpent;
 All these have no use.
 What good is a lecture to an angry, faithless man?
 It’s just a tiring exertion of speech!
 The company of the mean is not good; it is harmful.
 Says Eknath, “Shun the wicked and cherish the good.”

19. Take refuge in the name; it will lead you to Hari.
 Why resort to the needless activities of the world?
 Take refuge in That which will free you from agony
 At the hands of Yama in the kingdom of death—
 In That which will free you from the pain of rebirth.
 The name of Hari is the essence of all *sadhanas*,
 The seed of all *mantras*, the means to the Self.
 The singing of Hari is worth thousands of *yajnas* (rituals);
 Says Eknath, “Sing Hari, live as Hari Himself—

You'll become one with Hari; it's certain, beyond doubt!"

20. The sun and the moon in their circular course
Are ignorant of Hari; hence their unceasing whirl.
The thousand-headed serpent [in the Hindu story of Creation]
Joyously attempted to sing His praises,
But became exhausted in the end.
The Vedas, in hopes of describing Him, failed;
How, then, shall you know Him with no effort at all?
Accumulate merit, always sing the name;
Serve the true Teacher faithfully; then you'll realize Him.
Says Eknath, "Even fools become wise by singing His name;
So, I urge you all to sing aloud Hari's name."

21. Both the world outside and the world within
Will delude you, unless you see Hari in them.
Yajnavalkya, Shuka, Datta, and Kapila
Attained knowledge of Hari and remained united with Him.
Dear ones, come close: cling fast to Hari's name;
His name is the boat to cross over this sea.
There's no need for fear! By resorting to the name,
Countless saints have drowned in bliss, and thus were fulfilled.
Says Eknath, "I've opened a market that's unique:
My entire stock I offer you, and everything is free!"

22. Take refuge in Hari's name; sing it with faith.
Then Hari, Himself, will keep you in His care;
He'll take up the burden of your worldly life.
Don't languish and worry; our Lord knows your plight.
He protects every soul; He'll protect you as well.
Did you think only you would be unloved and forgot?
Accept this life in which you're now placed;
Witness the play your past karma has made.
Says Eknath, "It's only by Shri Hari's grace
That the store of past karma is finally erased."

23. When a poor girl marries a rich man's son,
All of her poverty vanishes at once.
The same is true of a devotee

On whom smiles Shri Hari's grace.
 Then God and His devotee are no longer apart,
 But one, as they were at the start—
 Like the lump of camphor on the *arati* tray,
 Consumed in, and united with, the fire.
 Says Eknath, "See even your attachments as Hari.
 Then you'll live as Hari; you'll live as the Self."

24. Sing Hari as you talk, and as you move about;
 Sing Hari while you play as a child.
 Sing the name of Hari; all your wishes will come true;
 You'll hold Brahman, like a fruit, in your palm.
 Sing Hari when you're standing, and when you're sitting down;
 Sing Hari as you witness the game Existence plays.
 Sing Hari when you're in your chair,
 and when you're in your bed;
 With every single bite of food, keep singing Hari's name.
 Sing Hari at the end of day, and Hari in the morning;
 Sing Hari when you march to war, and Hari when alone.
 Sing Hari when you're in trouble; cling to Him with love.
 Sing Hari when you're wandering, or when you're doing chores.
 Sing Hari when you're giving, and Hari when you get;
 Sing Hari as you move along, with every single step.
 Sing Hari in your homeland, and when you're far away;
 Sing Hari in the day and night, and always be awake.
 Sing Hari when alone, and in the crowded streets;
 Sing Hari when your last breath leaves—
 Sing Hari and be free.
 Performing duties, taking pleasure, or while you're earning wealth,
 Sing Hari's name, and all desires will surely be fulfilled.
 Sing Hari for your own delight, and for the good of all;
 Sing Hari to reach Brahman, even when you feel no love.
 O sing the name of Hari: Liberation will be assured.
 "Hari is my only treasure!" Remember this, and sing.
 Sing "Hari! Hari!" joyfully; He's the origin of all bliss.
 Says Eknath, "Please sing Hari, whether in a crowd or in the solitary woods;
 Within you and without—no matter when you are,
 There's no one else but Hari! He's sporting everywhere!"
 This song of fourteen stanzas is, indeed, the *Gayatri*; ¹

Those who sing it save themselves, and their ancestors as well.

25. Yogis try to see the Self through exertions and through strain;
 But that Self, whom I call Hari, I see without their pain.
 Hari, whom my ears have heard, has also filled my eyes;
 Everywhere I see Hari, only Hari, everywhere.
 The celebrated paths to God: *bhakti*, *karma*, and *jnan*,
 Are outlined in this song of Hari; it's the essence of all paths.
 Whoever sings this song with love for God
 Will be blessed with Hari's grace.
 Says Eknath, "My Hari-song has reached its end;
 So please sing Hari! Hari! I urge you all once again."

Meditation

In this storm-tossed ocean of the mind, your fragile boat is carried up and down, from side to side. You have but one anchor in this chaotic storm: the name of Hari. Fix that anchor deep in the bedrock of this ocean's floor, and cling tenaciously to the anchor-line; above the sound, above the frightful threat, hear only Hari! Hari! Hari! Hari! Then watch the turbulent waves subside, and see the dawning Sun, triumphant, rise reflected on a tranquil sea.

In times of raging storm, His name is your unfailing anchor; in the calm beauty of the day, the name is the Sun that fills your day with light and illumines the path ahead. At night, when navigating darkened seas, that same name will be the pole-star leading you home.

Hari! Hari! No other creature, place, or thing exists but Thee. Then, let me name all that appears before my outer or my inner eye as Thee, seeing Thee alone; for there's nothing else but Thee!

O what marvelous beauty, what delicious joy, what wondrous vision of content, arises, like perfume, from the nectar of the name!

O friends, let me not be the only one who enjoys such good fortune as this! This nectar is incomparably sweet, and it costs nothing. It's free! Just taste it: in the secret chamber of your mind, say "Hari!" Again, call "Hari!" Soon you'll be a Hari-junky, addicted to His name, like me!

* * *

NOTES:

1. *The Gayatri* is a Vedic hymn of twenty-four Sanskrit syllables regarded as holy and of particular efficacy by Hindus. It translates as: “We meditate on that glorious light of the divine Sun. May He, the lord of light, illumine our minds.”

* * *

8. After Night Comes The Dawn (4-2-2014)

When the storm-clouds of oppression and darkness loom all around you, and the gathering winds sweep the contents of your mind into a swirling chaos of confusion, do not be afraid—be firm, be confident! For after the storm, the Sun will reappear, and calm will reign over all, and there will shine forth upon you the clearest and most pleasant weather.

And when the melancholy of autumn turns into the bleak, cold, harshness of winter, and all seems empty, dreary, and void of life; and when your soul cries out in agony for some sign that the Spirit of God still lives and loves: do not loosen your hold on faith—be firm, be confident! For after the Winter comes the Spring, and life that seemed long dead revives with all the exuberance of a rekindled love or a newborn child, and life’s joy reawakens to fill the earth once more with song.

And when night’s shadows fall across the landscape of your heart, and though straining to see, your eyes can find no glimmer of light, nor even the slightest movement of hope within the darkness of your mind, but only the shadowy specter of fear that somewhere close, unseen, lies the pit of unremitting despair; don’t be afraid—be firm, be confident! For after the night comes the dawn, and the bright clarity of day, wherein is seen the truth that you are free as air, and never touched by night or day, or foul or fair weather, or the changing of the seasons; but, as they come and go in their unceasing rounds, you remain, the one pure Sky, the unblinking eye of Consciousness, who watches light and shadow alternate in this, your own spectacular play.

* * *

9. How May I Praise Thee, Lord? (1991)

Though my soul yearns to flood the world with Thy praise, when I open my mouth to speak, there are no words to say. My heart leaps up to sing, but the sound is stillborn in bewildered silence. My arms lift up thousands of bouquets of multi-hued flowers to lay at Thy feet but fall helpless at the realization that these flowers already belong to Thee, are indeed Thy glory and Thy gift.

How then may I praise Thee, Lord, who art the singer, the praise, and the instigator of the desire to praise? What words are worthy to speak of Thee? What gift is not Thine own? What song is not Thy sound? O God, who dost fill my heart with the desire to praise Thee, let Thy song of love cascade from this heart which is also Thine own, and enchant the world with its joyful melody. Let all hearts be awakened to see Thy spreading Light. Let knowledge of Thee spring up like a clear spring of water to quench the thirst of every mind and satisfy every soul with certainty and peace.

O God, Thou dost praise Thy own self in the countless hearts of countless creatures fountained forth from Thy own effulgent will. If it be Thy will, let this life which Thou has imagined into being become an instrument of Thy praise, whether in song or in silence. Let Thy Love, The Grace, Thy boundless Joy release itself and flow through this projected form of Thine to flood the world with Thy own Light and Thy own Song to lift all souls to Thee.

* * *

10. In Praise of God
(from *The Wisdom of Vedanta*, 1991)

I

Let us now, for our own heart's joy, give praise to God. He is the Refuge of the troubled mind and the Bringer of peace to the troubled heart. As a cold drink of water to a thirsty man, so is the name of God to the wearied soul. He is the cool Cave of the heart, wherein the soul finds quiet sanctuary from the darting demons of egotistical thought. He makes the passionate will to be stilled in silence and dispels all the incriminations of the wounded heart. O let us rest in that silent, bliss-filled Cave, hidden away from the clamor of the world; and drink from the fountain of the nectar of His name.

O mind, scratch His name on the cave-wall of your heart, and never let your eyes be without the sight of His name. Sing His name softly in that heart-sanctuary, that your ears may never be without the sound. And give praise to Him who alone is worthy of praise; for all that is done is done by Him, and every gift that comes is a gift from His hand.

O my heart, praise Him with words, and praise Him in acts of love. No sin has ever touched so much as a hair on the head of one who is busied with the praise and remembrance of God. If you wish to do some good in this world, O my soul, never stray from His dwelling-place in the heart. For, as the moon sheds the light of the Sun only when its face is turned to the Sun, we also are bathed in and reflect His gentle Love only when we're turned in love to Him.

II

We gather to give praise to God, not that we might please Him with our devotion, nor to make a show to others of our holy ways. Why, then, should we find pleasure in singing His praise? Is it not out of a pure love that springs from God Himself and wells up to overflow within us? Is it not His own heart's Love that made us, and that fills our every fiber with a sweet desire? And is it not His inward flame of Love 'round which we, moth-like, dance, yearning to be extinguished in His unifying light?

He is the Love and He is the Light that draws us to Himself. From His gentle Light we have emerged, and to Him we shall return. May we learn, in this fragile life, to

walk always in His Love, and to keenly sense in every moment His all-pervading Light. May we breathe His joy, and taste His sweetness, and shed His mercy on everyone we meet.

It is this for which we gather, for which we give Him praise. For, as the summer flowers blossom forth the exuberant joy and beauty of God on earth, so do our hearts blossom forth His Love in songs of praise; and mercifully shower on ourselves the sweet fragrance of delight.

III

Lord, when I look within me, I see Thy light and I know Thy peace, and I am guided by Thy sweet words of wisdom. And when I look about me, I see only Thee in all Thy splendorous forms. It has been said that man is like an empty bottle floating in the sea of God; water flows within and water flows without; everywhere there is only the vast ocean of God. Thus, Lord, I am immersed in Thy ocean of Consciousness and Light, and I know Thee both within and without.

But, O God, what of this “bottle,” this “me,” which separates the within from the without? What is this “I” that stands apart and speaks to Thee of within and without? O my Lord, even this body is Thine own! It is a form composed of Consciousness and Light, composed of Thyself; it is a shimmering mass of Energy projected from Thee, and can never be separate from Thee.

Who, then, is this “I” that speaks of “I and Thou,” and thus sets up a division between my soul and Thee? Truly, there is none else but Thee; there is none but the one Life that is manifest as all this vast cosmos in all its variety of color and form. And, though I sometimes imagine I am far from Thee, and I seek Thee in the darkness and turbulence of my mind, truly I can never be separate from Thee.

Therefore, let me ever remember my oneness, my identity, with Thee. For the lover, the Beloved, and the love itself, all are one. And I know: “I am the Soul of all; I am the Light that illumines the world. I am as pure and vast as the infinite blue sky. I am the Self of all. I am the Self of all.”

IV

I know, my Lord, that, in essence, I am Thy own and ever one with Thee. Yet, so long as there is in me this errant and rebellious mind, let it learn to be ever-ready at Thy service—for Thy service is the service of my own eternal Self. How, then, may I serve my greater Self, my God? Only by letting Thee live through me. By loving what Thou lovest. By desiring what Thou desirest. By seeing with Thine eye of equal vision and loving all as Thou dost love and sustain all.

Let me, then, be perfect in love, O God, as Thou art perfect, that I may be fit to serve as Thy instrument. All of us are helplessly driven to action in this world by the forces of Nature; therefore, let all my actions be done in the joyful remembrance of Thee, the divine Self who lives as me. And may the darkness of illusion be so dispelled in me that Thy light shines forth clearly in all I say or do.

Let me see no other in this world but the One whose dance of joy fills all this immense universe; let me offer my work as well as my heart's love to Thee in all Thy many forms. And, lastly, may my heart's good intent so move Thee that Thou dost consent to listen to my prayer, and lift up my mind to greater likeness with Thyself, till I am merged and melted into Thee, and know first-hand my oneness with my Lord.

V

O my Lord, remove from me all confusion and dullness of mind, and open my heart to the sweetness of Thy Love; for I have no other goal but Thee.

It is Thy most wondrous grace to me that, when I am sunk in the grayness of my own misery, Thou dost cast a sunbeam of Light into my heart to awaken in me Thy Love. O Lord, I have no other goal but Thee.

And so, I ask of Thee, O God, lift up my soul to Thee, that has so long been locked in a self-created dungeon of darkness and despair. Lift me into the clarity and freedom of Thy Light! For I have no other goal but Thee.

O Father, grant me this grace of Thine; light up my soul with the gladness of Thy joyful presence, and fill my heart with song. For I have no other goal but Thee, O Lord.

Thy Love is the food I crave; increase in me Thy bounty and let me feast on Thy sweetness. For Thy grace of Love is my only treasure, my sole desire. I have no other goal but Thee, O Lord.

Assuage, then, O God, the pain of darkness which I so often bear, and open my eyes and my heart to Thee. Reveal to me that Thou art all that appears before me, and that Thou art my very soul, my life, my light, my joy. Dear Lord, I have no other goal but Thee.

VI

Once, when this soul was meditating on her Lord, she became aware of the presence and nearness of God, and she earnestly entreated Him, saying, "Dear Lord, so many in this world of Thine suffer needlessly because of their ignorance of Thee and do not know the joy of devotion to Thee. What may I say or do to open their eyes to Thy truth and Thy joy?" And the Lord replied to her:

My child, give your love to all, but give sparingly of your words. I am within others also, and I shall reveal Myself to them in My time. Therefore, take no thought of others, how they might be shown the way to Me; for, if I would teach others through you, I will do so only after you have subdued yourself, so that I might shine freely from your eyes as a beacon for all. I am Love and am best taught by loving.

This soul, receiving that inner revelation, suddenly realized that her God was the Soul of her soul, the heart of her heart, and manifested through her as the joy of Love. And then and there she vowed her allegiance to the God of her heart, proclaiming:

Thou art Love, and I shall follow all Thy ways.
 I shall have no care, for Love cares only to love.
 I shall have no fear, for Love is fearless;
 Nor shall I frighten any, for Love comes sweetly and meek.
 I shall keep no violence within me, neither in thought nor in deed,
 For Love comes peacefully.
 I shall bear no shield or sword, for the defense of Love is love.
 I shall seek Thee in the eyes of men, for Love seeks Thee always.
 I shall keep silence before Thine enemies,
 And lift to them Thy countenance, for all are powerless before Thee.

I shall keep Thee in my heart with precious care,
 Lest thy Light be extinguished by the winds;
 For without Thy Light, I am in darkness.
 I shall go free in the world with Thee—
 Free of all bondage to anything but Thee—
 For Thou art my God, the sole father of my being,
 The sweet breath of Love that lives in my heart;
 And I shall follow Thee, and live with Thee,
 And lean on Thee 'til the end of my days.

And, after pledging her life to God's Love, this soul felt such inner rapture that her heart was overcome with sweetness and light from within; and with great humility she asked, "How, O Lord, may I subdue my own selfish desires so that Thy perfect Love may shine through me upon all Thy children?" And the Lord said to her:

Keep your mind on Me, and self shall be overcome. Your thoughts are with that which you love and lead you to the object of your desire. If you love the pleasures and favors of the world, your thoughts will be with the world, and you shall obtain your desire. But if you love Me, your thoughts will be with Me and you shall live as My beloved child, and I shall lead you to your end in Me.

And this soul was so filled with love and gratitude that she cried out, "O Lord, Thou art my joy and my sole desire!" And, so saying, she lifted up her mind to God, and kept it there in focused concentration, till all the wispy clouds of thought dissolved away, leaving her mind clear, free, and full of light. And then, from the stillness deep within this soul, came the heavenly desire to be merged in and one with God. "Dear God," she whispered, "let me be one with Thee—not that I might glory in Thy Love, but that I might speak out in Thy praise and to Thy glory, for the benefit of all Thy children!" And, in that very moment, the veil of separation fell away, and she exclaimed:

O my God, even this body is Thine own!
 Though I call to Thee and seek Thee amidst chaos,
 Even I, who seemed an unclean pitcher amidst Thy waters,
 Even I am Thine own.

Does a wave cease to be of the ocean?
 Do the mountains and the gulfs cease to be of the earth?
 Or does a pebble cease to be stone?

How can I escape Thee?
 Thou art even That which thinks of escape!

Even now, I speak the word, "Thou," and create duality;
 I love, and create hatred;
 I am in peace, and am fashioning chaos;
 Standing on the peak, I necessitate the depths.

But now, weeping and laughing are gone;
 Night is become day.
 Music and silence are heard as one;
 My ears are all the universe.

All motion has ceased;
 Everything continues.
 Life and death no longer stand apart.
 No I, no Thou;
 No now, or then.
 Unless I move, there is no stillness.

Nothing to lament, nothing to vanquish,
 Nothing to pride oneself on;
 All is accomplished in an instant.
 All may now be told without effort;
 Where is there a question?
 Where is the "temple?"
 Which the Imperishable, which the abode?

I am the pulse of the turtle;
 I am the clanging bells of joy.
 I bring the dust of blindness;
 I am the fire of song.
 I am in the clouds and in the gritty soil;
 In pools of clear water my image is found.
 I am the dust on the feet of the wretched,
 The toothless beggars of every land.
 I have given sweets that decay to those who crave them;
 I have given my wealth unto the poor and lonely.
 My hands are open; nothing is concealed.

All things move together of one accord;
 Assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.
 The Sun stirs the waters of my heart,
 And the vapor of my love flies to the four corners of the world;
 The moon stills me, and the cold darkness is my bed.

I have but breathed, and everything is rearranged
 And set in order once again.
 A million worlds begin and end in every breath,
 And, in this breathing, all things are sustained.

Meditation

The great Sufi mystic and poet, Jalaluddin Rumi, said: “The religion of love is distinct from all others; the lovers of God have a religion and a faith all their own.”

What is this religion of love? It has no name. Neither does it have any nationality. It is beginningless, and without end. It originates in the heart and can only be mimicked in speech. It is the cry of the heart for God’s mercy and grace. Yet, even this heartfelt pain is His grace; for this yearning is but the drawing of His comfort and solace.

Love calls, and Love responds. In both instances, that Love is accompanied by tears. Yet, even this calling, though painful, is sweet; for it is *His* Love that burns in the heart. And when He responds, the heart’s cup is filled with much more than it can hold. No eyes have seen this filling; no words have ever told of its taste. Yet, in countless hearts, throughout the universe, this religion lives, and supplies the world with Love.

* * *

11. Let Me Be Thy Instrument (4-3-2014)

Teach me, Lord, to look with love upon Thee and all Thy doings; for Thy love is my only delight and my only good. Teach me, Lord, to correct my wayward mind whenever it falls from remembrance of Thy goodness and the presence of Thy omnipotent hand in all that occurs here on earth. Lift me into Thy Light, O Lord, for without Thy grace, I am but a burden on the earth. Teach me to become perfect in wisdom, perfect in knowledge, perfect in contentment, perfect in love.

Let me by Thy instrument, Lord, in spreading Thy perfect joy to Thy children in whatever measure is ordained by Thee. Father, remove from me all darkness of ignorance, and all self-serving motivations, that I may truly serve as an instrument of Thy truth and Thy grace on earth; and I shall give adoration to Thee in my heart, and sing Thy praise throughout all the days of my life.

* * *

12. What May I Give Thee, Lord? (1991, rev. 4-2-2014)

What may I give Thee, O my Lord, who hast given to me so greatly of Thyself? What, indeed, do I have to give that is not already Thine? And who is this upstart 'I' who speaks of serving 'Thee', whom everyone knows art both the server and the served?

It is this very sense of 'I', this false ego that I offer, Father, as my gift to Thee. For there is nothing that is not Thine own: this body, mind and intellect, all belong to Thee and serve Thy purposes in reflecting Thy Wisdom and Thy Truth. It is only this mistaken sense of 'I', this 'me and mine', that stands like an interlocutor before Thee, obscuring the clarity of Thy inherent Light and the sweetness of Thy perfect Peace.

Then let this 'I' be always prostrate at Thy feet in adoration, silenced in surrender, awed and voiceless in anticipation of Thy touch. And let these eyes turn ever-upward unto Thee, though blinded by Thy brilliant Light, until, transparent as a

polished pane of glass, this soul becomes the pure conduit of Thy Truth, Thy Will, Thy Love, who art the only 'I' that truly lives.

* * *

13. The Meeting of Heart And Mind (from *The Wisdom of Vedanta*, 1991)

There is a saying that the man of devotion (the *bhakta*) and the man of knowledge (the *jnani*) are like a blind man and a lame man, respectively. Neither can get about on his own; the *bhakta* without discrimination isn't able to see where he's going, and the *jnani* without heart is lame and unable to go forward. A happy solution is found to both their problems, however, when the lame *jnani* is hoisted upon the shoulders of the blind *bhakta*. For then, the *jnani* provides the *bhakta* with vision, and the *bhakta* provides the *jnani* with the means of locomotion. The point of this saying, of course, is that this is what we must do with the two sides of our own nature: we must combine them and utilize both, so we have the benefit of both discriminative knowledge and the sweetness of devotion.

In the spiritual life, the intellect and the heart play equally important parts. Like the blind man and the lame man, each is helpless without the other. Just think: how many times do we meet up with a simple, good-hearted person, full of sincere love for God, and yet who, because of a lack of discrimination, becomes lost on a path which leads only to a gushy sentimentality and misplaced affections. And how often also do we see the proud and stiff, overly intellectual, person unwilling to let go of concepts long enough to feel the joy of love, or to simply pray with a humble, contrite, and loving heart.

Clearly, both are equally handicapped. The heart without discrimination leads one only into darkness and confusion. And the intellect without the sweetness of the heart makes of life a dry and trackless desert, without any flavor or joy. It is my considered opinion that if a person is to reach the highest perfection possible to man, there must be a balance of heart and mind. There must be both the knowledge of the Self, and at the same time, the love of God.

One of the great devotional works of the Vedantic tradition, the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, states: "The essence of all yoga consists in withdrawing the mind

from the objects of sense and fixing it on God alone.” Continuing, it says, “The mind must be engaged in one thing or another: if it meditates on sense-objects, it becomes worldly; if it meditates on God, it becomes Divine.”

All the great scriptures of Vedanta similarly extol in one way or another the focusing of the mind on God. Some call it “devotion”; some call it “awareness of the Self.” Narada, who was the epitome of the *bhakta*, states in his *Bhakti Sutras*, “The constant flow of love towards the Lord, without any selfish desire, is devotion.” And Shankaracharya, who was the *jnani* of *jnanis*, says in his *Vivekachudamani*, “Devotion is continuous meditation on one’s true Self.” Now, if we examine the matter closely, we can see that devotion to God is not in any way different from meditation on the Self; and that the experience of Divine Love is not different from the experience of the Bliss of the Self.

The mind experiences Unity as Consciousness and Bliss. The heart experiences God as the fullness of Love and Joy. Are these two different in any way? If the heart sings of God, does that take anything away from His Unity? If the mind speaks of Unity, does that add anything to His Bliss? The Truth remains, whether we make a joyful noise or keep silent. Whether we give Him this name or that, He remains the same. Whether we regard ourselves as the worshiper or the worshiped, there is nothing here but the One. Whether we call our intrinsic happiness by the name of Bliss or Love, its taste remains the same. We may call Him whatever name we like; we may sing it out to our heart’s content. Whether we are gamboling in the streets or sitting quietly at home, we are always God playing within God. To remember Him is our only happiness; to forget Him our only sorrow.

When we speak of Self-knowledge, we must differentiate between such Knowledge as is identical with the Bliss of the Self and that knowledge which is simply the verbal representation of such Knowledge. Intellectual knowledge of the nondual One is a wonderful thing, but it is only preparatory to true Knowledge, that Knowledge which is synonymous with enlightenment. Conceptual knowledge we must certainly go beyond. To do so, it is necessary to utilize the heart. Devotion leads the mind beyond mere intellectual knowledge to the experience of the Blissful Self—which is true Knowledge.

The 19th century saint, Sri Ramakrishna, was fond of bringing out this truth in his conversations and his songs. Here is one such song:

"How are you trying, O my mind, to know the nature of God?
 You are groping like a madman locked in a dark room.
 He is grasped through ecstatic love;
 How can you fathom Him without it?
 And, for that love, the mighty yogis practice yoga from age to age.
 Then, when love awakes, the Lord, like a magnet, draws to Him the
 soul.
 It is in love's elixir only that He delights, O mind!
 He dwells in the body's inmost depths, in everlasting Joy."

Sri Ramakrishna himself became so full of desire for God, whom he regarded as his "Mother," that people began to fear for his sanity when they would see him rubbing his face on the ground and weeping for his "Mother" to come. At times, he would sing this song:

"O Mother, make me mad with Thy love!
 What need have I of knowledge or reason?
 Make me drunk with Thy love's wine!
 O Thou, who stealest Thy bhakta's hearts,
 Drown me deep in the sea of Thy love!
 Here in this world, this madhouse of Thine,
 Some laugh, some weep, some dance for joy:
 Jesus, Buddha, Moses, Gauranga—
 All are drunk with the wine of Thy love.
 O Mother, when shall I be blessed
 By joining their blissful company?"

Such total abandon, such complete disregard for one's own reputation, status, future welfare, is typical of those who, in the end, attain to God. The great poet-saint, Kabir, spoke often of the need to renounce all other desires in order to attain God. "Love based on desire for gain," he said, "is valueless! God is desireless. How then, could one with desire attain the Desireless?" Kabir then went on to say, "When I was conscious of individual existence, the love of God was absent in me. When the love of God filled my heart, my lesser self was displaced. O Kabir, this path is too narrow for two to travel."

You see, in the experience of the One, there's no place for two; one of the two must go. Whether your focus is on God or on the Self, you must transcend the (illusory) separate self, the ego. The path of love, says Kabir, is too narrow for two

to travel; the ego must yield to the Beloved. “Very subtle,” he says, “is the path of love! There, one loses one’s self at His feet. There, one is immersed in the joy of the seeking, plunged in the depths of love as the fish in the depths of the water. The lover is never slow in offering his head for his Lord’s service. This, Kabir is declaring, is the secret of love.”

“How odd!” you may think; “Must I really offer my life, be willing to give up my head in order to attain God?” Let me tell you a story: it is a story from the *Masnavi*, the Persian masterpiece of the great Sufi poet, Jalaluddin Rumi. In it, he tells the story of the Vakil of Bukhara. The Vakil is the prince; he represents the supreme Lord. One of the subjects of this prince is told that the Vakil is seeking him for the purpose of chopping off his head. The poor man, hearing this, flees the city into the desert, and wanders from small village to village, in his attempt to stay out of the hands of the Vakil.

For ten years the man runs and runs. Then, finally exhausted and humiliated, he returns in surrender to Bukhara. The people there who knew him previously shout to him from their homes: “Escape while you can! Run! Run for your life!” But the man continues to walk in the direction of the Vakil’s palace. “The Vakil is searching everywhere for you,” they cry; “He has vowed to cut off your head with his own sword!” And, while everyone was shouting their warnings to this man, he just kept walking toward the palace of the prince. The people were calling to him from right and left: “Are you mad?” they shouted; “You are walking into certain death! Run! Run, while you have the chance!” But the man kept on walking, right into the palace of the Vakil.

When he reached the Vakil’s antechamber, he entered it and walked right up to the throne, then he threw himself on the floor at the prince’s feet. “I tried to escape you,” the man said, “but it is useless. My heart knows that my greatest destiny is to be slain by you. Therefore, here I am; do with me what you will.” But, of course, the prince had no desire to slay the man; he was very pleased, though, to see that the man had surrendered to him even when he thought he would lose his head thereby. And so, the Vakil raised the man up and made him his representative throughout the realm. And Rumi, the author of this story, says at the end, “O lover, cold-hearted and unfaithful, who out of fear for your life shun the Beloved! O base one, behold a hundred thousand souls dancing toward the deadly sword of his love!”

This is a recurrent theme among the devotional poets of the Sufi tradition. Kabir, whom I quoted a moment ago, asks of the devotee:

"Are you ready to cut off your head and place your foot on it? If so, come; love awaits you! Love is not grown in a garden, nor sold in the marketplace. Whether you are a king or a servant, the price is your head and nothing else. The payment for the cup of love is your head! O miser, do you flinch? It is *cheap* at that price! Give up all expectation of gain. Be like one who has died, alive only to the service of God. Then God will run after you, crying, 'Wait! Wait! I'm coming.'"

It is clear, of course, that what is necessary is not one's physical death, but the death of the ego-self. The little identity of "me" and "mine" is to be sublimated into the greater Identity of the one all-pervading Self through a continuous offering of the separative will into the universal will, an offering of the separative mind into the universal Mind, and the offering of the individual self in service of the universal Self.

Sri Ramakrishna knew very well how persistent this false sense of ego, of selfhood, is. For this reason, he taught, not the suppression of this ego, such as the *jnani* practices, but rather the utilization of the ego in devotion and service to God. "The devotee," says Sri Ramakrishna, "feels, 'O God, Thou art the Lord and I am Thy servant.' This is the 'ego of devotion.'" Why does such a lover of God retain the "ego of devotion?" There is a reason: The ego cannot be gotten rid of; so, let the rascal remain as the servant of God, the devotee of God."

You see, Sri Ramakrishna understood that, so long as this universe exists, the apparent duality of soul and God exists. Until such time as God merges the soul into Himself, both of these exist. We are the absolute Consciousness, to be sure; but we are also His manifested images. We are Brahman, but we are also (imagination within His) Maya; we are Shiva, but we are also Shakti; we are the universal Self, but we are also the individualized self. It is foolish not to acknowledge both sides of our nature. Failing to do so only leads us into great conflicts and difficulties. If we deny and neglect the existence of the soul, asserting only, "I am the one pure Consciousness," the active soul will rise up and make us acknowledge its presence. The only way to lead the soul to the experience of its all-pervasiveness is to teach it love for God, to transform it into

Divine Love. The soul that goes on expanding its power to love eventually merges into absolute Love and awakes to the truth that it *is* Love.

Remember, whatever you continually think of for a long time, that you become. So, if the mind continually thinks of God, it will attain the state of Love. No amount of knowledge will awaken the mind to love. Nor will the mind become quieted by force or the power of will. It will only become more frustrated, agitated and antagonistic. Instead of trying to do violence to the mind, lead it into meditation by the path of love. Soak it in the vat of love and dye it in the crimson color of love; then it will merge into the sweetness of God.

I'd like to share with you a few words of inspiration from a modern saint who extolled this very truth of devotion to God for many years. In my search for someone who best represented the synthesis of the heart and mind, I considered many different saints, both ancient and modern. But, it seemed to me that one of the very best examples that could possibly be held up is that of a woman who was called Anandamayee Ma, "the Bliss-permeated Mother." Anandamayee Ma is mentioned in Paramahansa Yogananda's *Autobiography Of A Yogi*, as a saint whom he met in 1935. Even then, she was a remarkable woman, inspiring everyone with whom she came in contact by her simple purity, and the depth of her God-realization.

She was born in 1896 in that part of India that is now the country of Bangladesh. Since the mid-1920's she has been one of the most revered saints in all of India. She stayed in one place for only brief periods, preferring to travel about India, visiting her many devotees here and there, for more than sixty years. She recently passed from life, leaving this world a poorer place. For she was the epitome of a *jnani*, with the heart of a *bhakta*. Her exposition of the Self, from the standpoint of Nondual Vedanta, was flawless. She possessed the shining intellect of a god. She was always poised in the highest state. And yet, she was also a humble servant of God, exhorting others to give all their devotion to God alone. Listen to what she had to say:

"It is by crying and pining for Him that the One is found. In times of adversity and distress as well as in times of well-being and good fortune, try to seek refuge in the One alone. Keep in mind that whatever He, the All-Beneficent, the Fountain of Goodness, does, is wholly for the best.

"He alone knows to whom He will reveal Himself and under which form. By what path and in what manner He attracts any particular person to Himself is incomprehensible to the human intelligence. The path differs for different pilgrims. The love of God is the only thing desirable for a human being. He who has brought you forth, He who is your father, mother, friend, beloved and Lord, who has given you everything, has nourished you with the ambrosia streaming from His own being—by whatever name you invoke Him, that name you should bear in mind at all times.

"Apart from seeking refuge in the contemplation of God, there is no way of becoming liberated from worldly anxiety and annoyance. Engage in whatever practice that helps to keep the mind centered in Him. To regret one's bad luck only troubles the mind and ruins the body; it has no other effect—keep this in mind! He by whose law everything has been wrought, He alone should be remembered.

"Live for the revelation of the Self hidden within you. He who does not live thus is committing suicide. Try to remove the veil of ignorance by the contemplation of God. Endeavor to tread the path of immortality; become a follower of the Immortal.

"...Meditate on Him alone, on the Fountain of Goodness. Pray to Him; depend on Him. Try to give more time to *japa* (repeating His name) and meditation. Surrender your mind at His feet. Endeavor to sustain your *japa* and meditation without a break.

"It is necessary to dedicate to the Supreme every single action of one's daily life. From the moment one awakes in the morning until one falls asleep at night, one should endeavor to sustain this attitude of mind. ... Then, when one has sacrificed at His feet whatever small power one possesses, so that there is nothing left that one may call one's own, do you know what He does at that fortunate moment? Out of your littleness He makes you perfect, whole, and then nothing remains to be desired or achieved.

"The moment your self-dedication becomes complete, at that very instant occurs the revelation of the indivisible, unbroken Perfection, which is ever revealed as the Self."

These words of Anandamayee Ma constitute the ancient, yet ever-new, message of all the saints. Knowledge is essential to clear away our doubts, to understand where our greatest good lies. But it is devotion that takes us to our Destination. The determined dedication of the heart, mind, and will to God is the means to fulfillment, and the means to the perfect Knowledge which is the Self.

Meditation

What does it mean to remember God? It means to awaken in yourself the awareness of His presence within you and all around you. It is to transform the sense of selfhood into the sense of the universal Spirit, and to transform the vision of “others” into the vision of God’s multi-formed beauty.

He is the Source of all that exists, and He is your inner Guide and Teacher. He is the majesty and greatness of your own soul. Remember Him with every breath, and thus keep alive the flame of His unconditional Love in your heart.

Say to Him: “Father, do Thou guide my life and my every thought, for I have no other joy but Thee. Thou art the strength of my soul, my only confidant and source of guidance. When I have forgotten Thee, I have forgotten my very heart’s blood, and I have left aside the very fiber and backbone of my life.

“What I live for, Thou art. My only desire, Thou art. The sole fulfillment of all my dreams, the treasure for which my soul yearns, Thou art. O God of my soul, blood of my heart, let me not forget Thee for a single moment! O God of gods, grant me this boon that I may ever remember Thee who art my soul’s support and strength, and let me love Thee and praise Thee ever in my heart.”

* * *

14. The Presence of God (5-1-14)

It is not intellect or learning that endears us to God, but the tender receptivity of our souls. The realization that we are nothing without His blessing is the sole passage into His presence; the poverty and pure longing of our heart is the only invitation He heeds.

The only knowledge He requires is the knowledge that He alone is the nectarean sweetness our heart desires; that He alone is the fulfillment of our soul's hunger and its thirst; that He alone is the source and aim of our every prayer, and that without His gracious presence there can be no happy day or hour.

How can it be that He is present every minute,
And yet to the devout lover's heart He is so painfully absent?
Alas, He is not present, nor can we taste His sweetness or see His beauty,
Unless we are truly present to Him.

* * *

15. The Secret of Natural Devotion
(Adapted from Jnaneshvar's *Amritanubhav* in
Abhayanda's *Jnaneshvar: The Life And Works of*
***The Celebrated 13th Century Indian Mystic-Poet, 1989*)**

Jnaneshvar, a casteless orphan, was one of the most brilliant poets, sublime mystics, and fascinating figures in all of Medieval Indian history. At an age when most men have scarcely begun their life's work, Jnaneshvar (Gyan-esh-war), who lived from 1271 to 1296, a mere span of twenty-five years, had ended his; but not before having built an everlasting monument to his memory in the written masterpieces he left behind. In so few years, he had established a legacy that was to revitalize his culture, his language, his religious tradition, and make a place for himself as an enduring presence in the hearts of his countrymen for all time. The following is from Chapter Nine of *Amritanubhav*:

Just as a nose might become a fragrance,
 Or ears might give out a melody
 For their own enjoyment,
 Or the eyes might produce a mirror
 In order to see themselves;

Or flowers might take the form of a bee,
 A lovely young girl might become a young man,
 Or a sleepy man might become
 A bed on which to lie;

As the blossoms of a mango tree
 Might become a cuckoo bird,
 Or one's skin might become
 Malayan breezes,
 Or tongues might become flavors;

Or as a slab of gold might become
 Articles of jewelry
 For the sake of beauty;
 Just so, the one pure Consciousness becomes
 The enjoyer and the object of enjoyment,
 The seer and the object of vision,
 Without disturbing Its unity.

A Shevanti flower bursts forth
 With a thousand petals;
 Yet it does not become anything
 But a Shevanti flower.

Similarly, the auspicious drums
 Of ever new experiences
 May be sounding,
 But in the kingdom of Stillness,
 Nothing is heard.

All of the senses may rush simultaneously
 Toward the multitude of sense objects,
 But—just as, in a mirror,
 One's vision only meets one's vision—
 The rushing senses only meet themselves.

One may purchase a necklace,
 Earrings, or a bracelet;
 But it is only gold,
 Whichever one receives.

One may gather a handful of ripples,
 But it is only water in the hand.

To the hand, camphor is touch,
 To the eye, it's a white object,
 To the nose it is fragrance;
 Nonetheless, it is camphor, and nothing but camphor.

Likewise, the sensible universe
 Is only the vibration of the Self.

The various senses attempt to catch
 Their objects in their hands—
 For example, the ears
 Try to catch the words;

But as soon as the senses
 Touch their objects,
 The objects disappear as objects.
 There's no object for one to touch;
 For all is the Self.

The juice of the sugarcane
 Is part of the sugarcane;
 The light of the full moon
 Belongs to the full moon.

The meeting of the senses and their objects
 Is like moonlight falling on the moon,
 Or like water sprinkling on the sea.

One who has attained this wisdom
 May say whatever he likes;
 The silence of his contemplation
 Remains undisturbed.

His state of actionlessness
 Remains unaffected,
 Even though he performs countless actions.

Stretching out the arms of desire,
 One's eyesight embraces
 The objects she sees;
 But, in fact, nothing at all is gained.

It is like the Sun
 Stretching out the thousand arms
 Of his rays in order to grasp darkness.
 He remains only light, as before;

Just as a person, awakening to
 Enjoy the activity of a dream,
 Finds himself suddenly alone.

Even one who has attained wisdom

May appear to become the enjoyer
 Of the sense objects before him;
 But we do not know
 What his enjoyment is like.

If the moon gathers moonlight,
 What is gathered by whom?
 It is only a fruitless
 And meaningless dream.

There is really no action or inaction;
 Everything that is happening
 Is the sport of the Self.

The undivided One
 Enters the courtyard of duality
 Of His own accord.
 Unity only becomes strengthened
 By the expansion of diversity.

Sweeter even than the bliss of liberation
 Is the enjoyment of sense-objects
 To one who has attained wisdom.
 In the house of *bhakti* (devotional love),
 That lover and his God
 Experience their sweet union.

Whether he walks in the streets
 Or remains sitting quietly,
 He is always in his own home.

He may perform actions,
 But he has no goal to attain.
 Do not imagine
 That, if he did nothing,
 He would miss his goal.

He does not allow room
 For either remembering or forgetting;

For this reason,
His behavior is not like that of others.

His rule of conduct is his own sweet will.
His meditation is whatever
He happens to be doing.
The glory of liberation
Serves as an *asana* (seat cushion)
To one in such a state.

God Himself is the devotee;
The goal is the path.
The whole universe is one solitary Being.

It is He who becomes a God,
And He who becomes a devotee.
In Himself,
He enjoys the kingdom of Stillness.

The temple itself is merged
In the all-pervasive God;
The motion of time
And the vastness of space
Are no more.

Everything is contained in the Being of God.
If a desire
For the Master-disciple relationship arises,
It is God alone who must supply both out of Himself.

Even the devotional practices,
Such as *japa* (repetition of God's name), faith and meditation,
Are not different from God.

Therefore, God must worship God
With God, in one way or another.

The temple, the idol, and the priests—
All are carved out of the same stone mountain.

Why, then, should there be devotional worship?
[Or why shouldn't there be devotional worship?]

A tree spreads its foliage,
And produces flowers and fruits,
Even though it has no objective
Outside of itself.

What does it matter if a dumb person
Observes a vow of silence or not?
The wise remain steadfast in their own divinity
Whether they worship or not.

Will the flame of a lamp
Remain without light
If we do not ask her to wear
The garment of light?

Is not the moon bathed in light
Even though we do not ask her
To wear the moonlight?

Fire is naturally hot;
Why should we consider heating it?

A wise person is aware
That he, himself, is the Lord;
Therefore, even when he is not worshiping,
He is worshiping.

Now the lamps of action and inaction
Have both been snuffed out,
And worshiping and not worshiping
Are sitting in the same seat,
And eating from the same bowl.

In such a state,
The sacred scriptures are the same as censure,
And censure itself

Is the same as a sweet hymn of praise.

Both praise and censure
Are, in fact, reduced to silence;
Even though there is speech,
It is silence.

No matter where he goes,
That sage is making pilgrimage to God;
And, if he attains to God,
That attainment is non-attainment.

How amazing
That in such a state,
Moving about on foot
And remaining seated in one place
Are the same!

No matter what his eyes fall upon
At any time,
He always enjoys the vision of God.

If God Himself appears before him,
It is as if he has seen nothing;
For God and His devotee
Are on the same level.

Of its own nature,
A ball falls to the ground,
And bounces up again,
Enraptured in its own bliss.

If ever we could watch
The play of a ball,
We might be able to say something
About the behavior of the sage.

This spontaneous, natural devotion
Cannot be touched by the hand of action,

Nor can knowledge penetrate it.

It goes on without end,
In communion with itself.
What bliss can be compared to this?

This natural devotion is a wonderful secret;
It is the place in which meditation
And knowledge become merged.

O blissful and almighty Lord!
You have made us the sole sovereign
In the kingdom of perfect bliss.

How wonderful
That You have awakened the wakeful,
Laid to rest those who are sleeping,
And made us to realize
Our own Self!

We are Yours entirely!
Out of love,
You include us as Your own,
As is befitting Your greatness.

You do not receive anything from anyone,
Nor do You give anything of Yourself to anyone else.
We do not know how You enjoy your greatness.

O noble One!
It is Your pleasure
To become our nearest and dearest
By taking away from us
Our sense of difference from You.

* * *

16. Trust In God (11-02-13)

It is not entirely agreed upon by humankind that the universe was created and is governed by a single divine Mind, but after centuries of careful examination of the evidence, the great majority of thinking people have accepted this hypothesis as the correct one. As this divine Mind is taken to be unborn and without progenitors, it is also accepted that He has no 'given' name but is referred to by various names according to the language of custom in various regions of the earth. Therefore, He has been called by many different names, all of which are equally valid for the purpose of communing with Him, since He is ever-present as our very Soul and breath. Some call Him "Lord", "Hari", "Adonai", or "Rahim". I will refer to Him as "God", a name I believe to be of Germanic or Gothic origin, and commonly accepted today by all English-speaking people.

God is not only the Creator and Governor of the universe, He is the Foundation of existence, being both the conscious Ground as well as the substance of the universe, and so comprises both our mind and our body, and all else that exists. All is contained in Him, and partakes of Him, and nothing has being or existence other than in Him. This being so, we must ask 'How is it possible for one to connect to God? How does one experience His presence?' This question is like that of a wave on the ocean asking how it may connect to the ocean; or how it might experience the Ocean's presence. As a wave is contained in the ocean, we are contained in God, and therefore we are able to know His presence both within and without. What more is there to be said?

Be still and know the One who is, the One who lives you. Trust in Him. Every moment He is watching over us all. Though turmoil and anxiety fill many hearts, and fear and distrust is rampant in the world of men, trust in His inscrutable will; He will unfailingly bring us to the wellspring of His love and the refuge of eternal peace.

* * *

17. God's Love (2-9-14)

Love is born of God and may rest in nothing less than God.
For we see that all worldly love is but one half of an inseparable pair,
And we recall with gladness that God's love has no contrary;
For He is the One in whom all opposites merge,
The One whose love never wanes.

Search this earth and through all the galaxies, you'll find
Nothing truly worthy of love but God. For all else is lovable
Only to the degree that it is reflective of Him.
Let not your love, therefore, settle on anything or anyone but Him.
For He alone is the source of joy,
The Giver of wisdom and satisfaction,
The final destination of all the heart's desires,
And the source and resting place of every wandering soul.

* * *

18. Why We Are Here (2-5-14)

Here's a question: Are we each responsible for our own decisions, and therefore responsible for the course of our own lives, with no one to blame but ourselves? Or is the good Lord who dreams up all these souls, and places us into this world with our individual proclivities, the ultimately responsible one? Well, I think you can see the answer to this question at once: Both of us are responsible. God is the ultimate cause, and we are the effective causes, being instrumental in bringing about the resultant effects. But of course, we and God are not separate—we souls being mere figments of His imagination, entirely governed by Him.

And, since ultimately there is only God, why do you suppose He continues to produce these apparent worlds and souls and all this hubbub? What does it really matter how each manifested soul passes the time in this essentially unreal tapestry of space and time? It matters to each of us, of course; but why does it matter to Him? Is He keeping score? Does He have some stake in the game? Perhaps He's simply making the most of His lonely omnipotence; He has certainly produced a magnificent show! No one would suggest that it would be better if He did nothing. Still, we can't help wondering what justifies putting on this extravagant pageant? Perhaps, like us, He's simply susceptible to the appeal and satisfaction of artistic creation.

But, if you ask me, from a mystic's point of view, there's really nothing in it for Him. He remains blissfully the same, no matter what. So, what's His motivation? Could it be He's simply demonstrating by example the epitome of a perfectly selfless act? Is He giving tirelessly of His blessings, radiating mercy to every creature, in order to show us the path of blessedness and joy? His own glory is mirrored in millions of Suns throughout the cosmos, and we, in imitation, reflect His intrinsic love in our lives; and we pray: Mercy, Mother, on all Thy children. Mercy, Mother, give mercy to all.

Of course, our Father/Mother loves His mind-born children and wishes them well; for, after all, they're truly not *other* than Himself. But more than that, His very nature is love. And that love is expressed within us, His Mind-born creations, *compelling* us to His service. We have no other course; no one is able to escape Him. His love binds us in its tender grip, and we desire no other love. It is this love that leads us to selflessness, to the dissolution of the petty ego. This is His purpose and His motivation: to transform us into Himself, to return us to our original purity. Who knows why? It's simply what He does. And, therefore, I

also know my *own* purpose, my journey's end: I live to do His will, to tell all I know of Him, to sing His praise. Clearly, I'm at His mercy. Like you, I receive only what He gives.

The Hindus call this creation, this repeated universal manifestation, "God's *lila*, His play". From the invisible *Unum*, a tangible *Pluribus* bursts forth. And each new manifestation culminates at last in the unification of opposites; repeatedly, the illusion of chaotic multiplicity is happily burst! Suddenly, He and I are one—the same One! And then, after some inactivity, the game begins once again! Those who haven't seen it cannot appreciate the incredible wonder of it. And those who have seen it cannot tell of it, for, once seen, there's no one left to hear or tell. Nothing to lament, nothing to vanquish, nothing to pride oneself on; all is accomplished in an instant.

* * *

19. *Haripatha: Sing Hari* (from *Jnaneshvar*, 1989)

In addition to his major works, *Jnaneshvari* and *Amritanubhav*, Jnaneshvar (1271-1296) composed a number of devotional songs as well. In them, he sings of his inner experiences and of his love of God and his Guru, Nivrutti. One such collection of songs is *Haripatha*, or “Sing Hari,” in which he utilizes a traditional poetic form to extol the practice of the repetition of the name of Hari, an endearing name for God.¹ These songs, presumed to have been written during Jnaneshvar’s years at Pandharpur, are sung to various melodies in Maharashtra to this day, in their original Marathi.

Many of the great saints of Maharashtra—Nivrutti, Jnaneshvar, Tukaram, Namadev, and Eknath—wrote such *Haripathas*, declaring the chanting or repeating of the name of God to be the simplest, easiest, and surest way to the continual recollection of God’s presence. This practice is regarded, throughout India, as the means to the focusing of the mind in contemplation of God, and as the natural expression of the love of God. Jnaneshvar advocates it as well; he says, ‘Chant within the name of Hari; your heart will melt with love. And that love will open the door to the true awareness — that you and your beloved God are one.’

Haripatha

I.

One who ascends, even for a moment,
To the threshold of God
Will assuredly attain the four stages of Liberation.
Therefore, chant the name of Hari.
Yes, chant the name of Hari!
The value of chanting His name is immeasurable;
So, let your tongue eagerly chant the name of Hari.

The authors of the Vedas and the various scriptures
Have all proclaimed this path with their arms upraised.
Jnanadev says: chant Hari’s name;
The Lord will then become your slave,
Just as Krishna became the servant of the Pandavas,
As Vyasa, the poet, has so excellently told.

II.

In all the four Vedas, Hari's praise is sung.
 The six systems of philosophy, and the eighteen Puranas
 Also sing Hari's praise.
 Just as we churn curds for the purpose of getting butter,
 Likewise, we churn the Vedas, philosophies, and the Puranas
 For the purpose of tasting the sweet butter of Hari.
 Hari is the goal; the rest is mere tales.

Hari is equally in everyone —
 He's as much in all our souls as He is in the gods;
 He's the inner Self of all.
 Therefore, don't weary your mind with strange practices;
 Jnanadev says: You will experience heaven
 Just by chanting Hari's name.
 Everywhere you look, you'll see only Him.

III.

This insubstantial universe, this web
 Of interacting qualities (*gunas*),
 Is but His superficial form;
 His essence is the formless 'I'
 Which is always the same,
 Unaffected by the interplay of the qualities.
 If you discriminate in this way, you will understand
 That the continual remembrance of Hari
 Is the supreme goal to be attained.
 Hari is both the Formless and the changing forms;
 Remember Him, lest your mind wander idly away.

He, Himself, has no form;
 He cannot be seen.
 He cannot be bound to a single form;
 He's the Source of all forms,
 Both the animate and the inanimate.
 Jnanadev says: Rama-Krishna, the Lord,
 Has pervaded my mind;
 He is all I meditate on.

Blessed is this birth!
 I seem to be reaping infinite fruits
 From the good deeds I performed in the past.

IV.

To speak of performing strenuous deeds
 When all one's strength is spent
 Is nothing but foolish talk;
 To speak of one's love for God
 When there is no feeling in the heart
 Is also worthless and vain.
 Only when true feeling arises
 Can love for God bear fruit.
 Will the Lord appear to you at your sudden call?
 No. You must yearn for Him in your heart!

It's sad to see that you weary yourself
 With so many worthless tasks.
 Day after day, you anxiously fret
 For your petty worldly affairs.
 My dear, why do you never think
 To turn to Hari with love?
 Jnanadev says: It's enough
 If only you chant His name;
 At once your fetters will fall.

V.

You may perform the rites of sacrifice,
 Or follow the eight-fold path of yoga,
 But neither will bring you to peace;
 These are only tiresome activities of the mind,
 And usually bring only pride.
 Without true, heart-felt love for God,
 You'll not attain knowledge of Him.
 How is it possible to experience union with Him
 Without the Guru's grace?
 Without the discipline of *sadhana*,
 He cannot be attained.

In order to receive, one must know how to give;
 Give your love, and He'll shower you with grace.
 Is there anyone who would be intimate with you
 And teach you your highest good,
 If you felt no love for him?
 Jnanadev says: This is my judgment based on experience;
 Living in the world is easy in the company of the saints.

VI.

When one receives the grace of a saint,
 His ego-consciousness dissolves;
 Eventually, even God-consciousness will dissolve.
 If you light a piece of camphor,
 It produces a bright flame;
 But after awhile, both camphor and flame disappear.
 In the same way, God-consciousness
 Supplants ego-consciousness at first,
 But eventually,
 Even the awareness 'I am He' dissolves.

One who comes under the influence of a saint
 Has arrived at the gates of Liberation;
 He will attain all glory.
 Jnanadev says: I delight in the company of the saints!
 It is due to their grace that I see Hari everywhere —
 In the forest, in the crowds, and also in myself.

VII.

Those who have no love in their hearts for God
 Accumulate a mountain of sin
 Which surrounds them like a diamond-hard shell.
 He who has no love for God
 Is totally deprived of love.
 He who never even thinks of God
 Is undoubtedly an unfortunate wretch.

How can those who are ceaselessly gossiping
 Ever attain the vision of God?

Jnanadev says: That which lives
 As the Self of everyone and everything is my only treasure.
 That is Hari.
 It is He alone I adore.

VIII.

If our minds incline us to the company of the saints,
 Then we'll acquire the knowledge of God.
 Let your tongue be ever chanting His name;
 Let your hunger be ever for Him.
 Even Shiva, who is absorbed in His own Self,
 Loves to hear the repetition of God's name.
 Those who single-mindedly chant His name
 Will realize Him, and be freed from duality;
 They'll revel forever in the awareness of Unity.
 Those lovers of God who drink the nectar of His name
 Enjoy the same sweetness that yogis enjoy
 When their Kundalini Shakti awakes.

Love for the Name arose early in Prahlada;
 Uddhava won discipleship to Krishna
 Through his love of the Name.
 Jnanadev says: The way of Hari's name is so easy;
 Yet, see how rare it is!
 Few indeed are those who know
 The infinite power of His name.

IX.

He has no knowledge
 Whose mind does not dwell on Hari,
 And whose tongue speaks of everything but Hari.
 He is a miserable person
 Who takes birth as a human
 And yet fails to seek the awareness of Unity.
 How could that person find rest in the name of Hari?

Unless the Guru sweeps away the sense of duality,
 How could he who has no knowledge
 Relish the sweetness of chanting God's name?

Jnanadev says: Repetition of the Lord's name
Is really a meditation on Him;
By chanting Hari's name,
All illusion is dissolved.

X.

You may take a bath
In the confluence of the three holy rivers;
You may visit all the sacred pilgrimage places;
But if your mind does not always rest
In the name of the Lord,
All your efforts are in vain.
He is very foolish who turns away
From remembrance of God's name;
When the soul is drowning in misery,
Who else but God will rush to its aid?

Valmiki, who is certainly worthy of respect,
Has proclaimed the value of chanting God's name;
"The Name," he says, is the one trustworthy means
For salvation in all the three worlds."
Jnanadev says: Please chant Hari's name;
Even your children will be saved.

XI.

It is enough to chant "Hari" aloud;
In an instant, all your sins will be burnt.
When a pile of grass is set ablaze,
The grass is transformed into fire;
Likewise, one who chants Hari's name
Becomes transformed into Him.

The power of chanting the name of Hari
Cannot be fathomed or gauged;
It has the power to drive away
All manner of devils and ghosts.

Jnanadev says: All-powerful is my Hari;
Even the Upanishads

Have failed to express His greatness.

XII.

Taking baths in various holy rivers,
 Observance of vows, and other such outward trappings,
 Cannot grant fulfillment,
 If in your heart no faith or love exists.
 My dears, it seems that you're needlessly engaged
 In the performance of unfruitful deeds!
 It is only by the path of love
 That God may be approached;
 There is no other way.

Give love to God,
 And He will be as tangible to you
 As a fruit in the palm of your hand.

All other means of attaining God
 Are like the attempt to pick up liquid mercury
 That's been spilled out upon the ground.
 Jnanadev says: I have been entrusted
 By my Guru, Nivritti,
 With the possession of the formless God.

XIII.

Only when you have the continual experience of God
 As equally existing in everyone and everything
 Will you be truly established in *samadhi*.
 This experience is unavailable to one
 Who is addicted to duality.
 Only when the mind
 Becomes illumined by the experience of *samadhi*
 Will it attain perfect understanding.
 There is no higher attainment for the mind than this.

When one attains to God,
 All miraculous powers are also attained;
 But of what use are these powers by themselves
 Without the bliss of *samadhi*?

In such a case, they are only obstacles
 To one's progress on the path.
 Jnanadev says: I have become supremely fulfilled
 In the continual remembrance of Hari.

XIV.

The Goddess of destruction will not even glance at you
 If you chant fervently and unceasingly the name of Hari.
 The chanting of His name
 Is equal to a lifetime of austerities;
 All your sins will fly away.

Even Shiva chants the mantra, "Hari, Hari, Hari!"
 Whoever chants it will attain Liberation.
 Jnanadev says: I am always chanting
 The name of the Lord;
 That is how I have realized my Self,
 The place of supreme inner peace.

XV.

Let the chanting of Hari's name
 Be your sole determination;
 Throw away even the mention of duality.
 But, alas, such mastery
 In the awareness of Unity is rare.
 First you must practice the vision of equality;
 Only Hari must be seen everywhere.
 In order to do this,
 The mind and senses must be restrained.

When all these essential requirements are fulfilled,
 One merges in Hari,
 And becomes Hari, Himself.
 Just as one solitary Sun
 Manifests in countless rays of light,
 One solitary supreme Being
 Manifests Himself in all these countless forms.
 Jnanadev says: My mind is fixed
 On one unfailing practice:

The chanting of Hari's name.
Thus, I've become free of all future rebirths.

XVI.

It is an easy thing to chant the name of God,
Yet they are few who chant His name
With full awareness of its power.
Whoever has attained the experience of *samadhi*
By chanting His name
Has acquired all the miraculous powers as well.

If you unfailingly commit yourself
To chanting His name,
Then miraculous powers, intellectual brilliance,
And a disposition toward righteousness,
All will be yours;
Thus will you cross the ocean of illusion.
Jnanadev says: The Lord's name has become
Engraved on my heart;
Because of this,
I see Hari, my Self, everywhere.

XVII.

By chanting the name of Hari and singing His praise,
Even one's body becomes holy.
By practicing the austerity of chanting His name,
One makes a home for himself in heaven
That will endure for ages and ages.

By chanting His name,
Even one's parents, brothers, and other loved ones
Will become united with God.
Jnanadev says: The secret of His name's infinite power
Was laid in my hands by my Guru, Nivritti.

XVIII.

One who reads the scriptures devotedly,
Who repeats Hari's name,
And keeps company with no one but Hari,

Attains heaven;
 He earns the merit of bathing in all the holy rivers.
 But piteous is he who chooses
 To indulge his mind in its wandering ways.

He alone is blessed and fortunate
 Who continues to chant the name of God.
 Jnanadev says: I love to taste the name of Hari;
 Every moment I am meditating on Him.

XIX.

The proclamation and command of the Vedas
 And all the holy scriptures
 Is “Repeat the name of Hari,
 The supreme Lord, who is the Source of all.”
 Without the remembrance of Hari,
 All other practices, such as rituals and austerities,
 Are only futile exertions.
 Those who have dedicated themselves
 To remembrance of His name
 Have found unending peace and contentment.
 They have become enveloped in its sweetness
 Like a bee who, in its search for honey,
 Becomes enveloped in the closed petals of a flower.

Jnanadev says: Hari’s name is my mantra;
 It is also my formidable weapon.
 Out of fear of this weapon,
 The god of death keeps his distance
 From me and from my family as well.

XX.

The repetition of God’s name
 Is the only treasure desired by His lovers;
 By its power, all their sins are destroyed.
 The chanting of His name is equal
 To lifetimes of performing austerities;
 It’s the easiest pathway to Liberation.

For one who chants the name of God,
 Neither yoga nor the ritual of *yajna* is needed;
 The injunctions of duty do not pertain to him;
 He transcends all illusion.
 Jnanadev says: No other practices,
 Or rituals, or rules of conduct are necessary
 For one who chants the name of Hari with love.

XXI.

There are no limitations of place or time
 For the chanting of Hari's name.
 Hari's name will save your family
 On both your mother's and your father's side.
 His name will wash away every blemish and stain.
 Hari is the savior
 Of all who have fallen into ignorance.

Who can think of a word adequate to describe
 The good fortune of one whose tongue is restless
 To chant the name of Hari,
 The Source of all life?

Jnanadev says: My chant of Hari's name
 Is always going on;
 I feel that I have thereby made
 An easy path to heaven for my ancestors as well.

XXII.

There are very few who make the chanting of His name
 An unfailing daily practice;
 Yet, it is in this way that one may gain
 The company of Hari, Lakshmi's Lord.
 Chant "Narayana Hari, Narayana Hari,"
 And all material happiness
 As well as the four stages of Liberation
 Will dance attendance at your door.

If there is no room in your life for Hari,
 That life is truly a hell;

Whoever lives such a life will surely
 Suffer hell after death as well.
 Jnanadev says: When I asked my Guru
 The value of the name of God,
 Nivritti told me,
 “It is greater than that of the sky above.”

XXIII.

Some philosophers say that
 The universe is made of seven basic principles;
 Others say the number is five, or three, or ten.
 When Hari is realized, He reveals that,
 No matter what the number,
 All those principles emanate from Him alone.
 But let us not be concerned with philosopher’s games;
 The name of God is not like that.
 It’s the easiest pathway to approach to the Lord;
 It involves no strain or pain.

Some speak of *ajapa-japa*
 As the practice that should be used;
 This practice leads to a reversal of prana’s flow.
 To pursue this practice,
 One needs much stamina and strength of will;
 But the chanting of God’s name with love
 Is free of all such difficulties.
 Jnanadev says: I’m convinced that a man lives in vain
 If he does not resort to the Name.
 That’s why I continue to extol
 The chanting of the Name.

XXIV.

The practice of *japa*, austerity, and rituals
 Is futile without true purity of heart.
 One must have the heart-felt conviction
 That God lives in every form.
 Please hold onto that conviction,
 And throw away your doubts!
 Chant aloud, “Rama-Krishna, Rama-Krishna,”

As loudly as you can.

Do not become conscious of your position and your wealth,
Your family lineage, or your virtuous acts;
All these considerations produce only pride.
Hasten only to sing Hari's name with great love.
Jnanadev says: Hari pervades my mind and my meditation;
I feel every moment that I'm living in Him.

XXV.

To Hari, the learned and unlearned are the same;
By repeating His name,
Eternal freedom is won.
The Goddess of destruction will never even enter
That home where "Narayana Hari" is sung.

How can we know His greatness,
When even the Vedas could not explain Him?
Jnanadev says: This vast universe
Has turned into heaven for me;
Such luscious fruit has come into my hands
Only because I cling to His name.

XXVI.

O my mind, cherish remembrance of Hari's name,
And Hari will shower His mercy on you.
It is no great difficult chore
To chant the name of the Lord;
Therefore, please chant His name
With a voice that is sweet with love.

There is nothing greater or more uplifting
Than the chanting of His name;
So why should you wander on difficult paths,
Forsaking the sweet path of His name?
Jnanadev says: I keep silence without,
And keep turning the rosary of His name within;
Thus, my *japa* is always going on.

XVII.

There is no pleasure as sweet as His name;
 All the scriptures declare
 That it's the secret to be attained.
 So, do not spend even a moment
 Without enjoying the nectar of His name.
 This world is only a superficial play;
 It is only an imagination, after all.
 Without the remembrance of Hari,
 It's only a futile round of births and deaths.

By remembering His name,
 All your sins will go up in flames;
 Therefore, commit your mind to chanting Hari's name.
 Take the attitude of adherence to Truth,
 And break the spell of illusion.
 Do not allow the senses to bar your vision of the Self;
 Have faith in the power of chanting His name.

Be kind, serene and compassionate toward all;
 In this way, you'll become the welcome guest of the Lord.
 Jnanadev says: The chanting of God's name
 Is the means to *samadhi*; this, I swear, is true.
 This wisdom was bestowed upon me
 By Nivrittinath, my Guru.

* * *

NOTES:

1. This 'Haripatha' by Jnaneshvar is from Swami Abhayananda, *Jnaneshvar: The Life & Works of The Celebrated 13th Century Indian Mystic-Poet*, Atma Books, Olympia, Wash., 1989; pp. 221-234. If you would like to own this book, you may freely download it in PDF format from my "Downloads" page.

2. For those who would like to compare the 'Haripatha' by Ecknath Maharaj (1548-1649), it may be found in the article "Japa: The Remembrance of God (10/4/14)" on my website: www.themysticsvision.com. That article was taken from my book, *The Wisdom of Vedanta*, which is also available for free download at my website.

* * *

20. On The Existence of God (11-17-14)

No matter how far back in history we probe, we find that there have always been people who have asserted the existence of a spiritual reality underlying the apparent reality, and an equally insistent number of people who assert that the physical appearance is all there is. Those who assert the existence of a Divine Mind of whom we all consist say that, while we each appear to be a singular body and mind located temporarily in this particular historic place and time, we are actually evolving manifestations of one all-pervading Spirit or Mind, and that is ultimately who we are; That is our true Identity. It is a question of whether we identify with the Form or the Substance: Your physical form is the changing, evolving you; your substance is the one Spiritual reality. We might compare our situation to that of the ocean (the substance) and its waves (the forms). The distinction between the ocean and its waves is a distinction of appearance, because, in actuality, the ocean and its waves are not ultimately different. Likewise, the difference between the eternal Spiritual reality that constitutes your being, and the apparent 'you' that is a singular individual form is a mere distinction of appearance.

As in the case of the ocean and the waves, your form will continue to change and eventually decompose, while the substance—which is God's Energy, along with His pure, eternal Consciousness—will remain. That substance is who you are eternally, while the singular form is a transient appearance. What shall we call this eternal substance, this eternal you? We can call It God, the Divine Mind, the Self, or any number of other names. And regardless of what we call It, both the eternal substance and the transient appearance, like the ocean and its waves, are both the same stuff. The one reality is both the substance and the form, the real and the apparent, the eternal and the transient. They are different in appearance, but, ultimately, they are the same. The only real difference is that the substance is forever, while the form is but a fleeting appearance.

But how do we know that such an indivisible underlying Spirit actually exists? Many honest and intelligent people have claimed to have seen and experienced It while lifted to an elevated level of consciousness. Many others have not experienced It and can find no reason to believe that such a Spiritual reality exists. Ultimately, the answer to the question of the existence of an eternal spiritual reality underlying our individual identity lies in the content of our own intellectual experience. Many have not consciously experienced the reality of God during their

lifetimes and remain unconvinced. Many others *have* experienced the presence of God to varying degrees through what they describe as a transcendent experience of divine Grace. Some have even described having an experience of clear awareness of their eternal Identity. Ultimately, the truth becomes known, not through reason or logic, but by one's own personal experience. And that is ultimately determined, not by our own will, but by the will of the merciful One. May He grant that experience to you.

* * *

21. The Retention of Divine Awareness (4-26-14)

I am occasionally asked if I continue to have 'mystical' experiences similar to my initial experience in the mountain forests of Santa Cruz which I documented in my book, *The Supreme Self*. The answer is 'No, I do not continue to have similar experiences.' But the truth is that there is a kind of 'accustomization' that has followed that experience, and which increases or diminishes in clarity at various times. It's like any other kind of knowledge—say the knowledge of one's proximate environment; there are times when it becomes more pronounced in your awareness, and times when it is less so. I find it impossible to retain the same level of awareness of God's presence in a continuous manner, without interruption; but I nonetheless make every effort to retain that awareness as best I can at all times.

My initial mystical experience was truly transformational; I was never the same again. I had been given an enlightening knowledge that affected my vision of the world forever thereafter and instilled in me a lasting certainty that has never been more than the flutter of an eyelid away. For the most part, I hold onto the knowledge that He alone is—in my surroundings, in myself, and in the guidance and movement of all that exists. The intensely clarified awareness of His intimate presence, however, comes only rarely, though I long for it constantly. It's quite possible that age has some deleterious effect on the refinement and clarity of my intellect and my spiritual perception; I can't say for certain. But so long as He grants me the capability of remembering Him, I am filled repeatedly with an upsurging of loving gratitude and freedom from care that is invincible. My knowledge remains as strong and certain as ever, and I live consciously, confidently, in His merciful grace.

* * *

22. What Kind of Love Is This? (11-09-2015)

When we experience the kind of attraction to another person that we humans call “love”, we form at the same time its opposite in the form of repulsion, or “hatred”. This is because of the very nature of the human affections: for love and hate are but two sides of the same coin. Just as “north” cannot exist without “south”, just as “up” cannot exist without “down”, just as the amplitude of a wave cannot exist without its trough, neither can “attraction” or “love” exist without its opposite, “repulsion” or “hate”. This is the nature of the wave-like affections that humans produce. However, there is a kind of love that is not subject to this inevitable opposition: it is the love that emanates from the divine Self in us. That love does not consist of two polar opposites; it is singular and constant, because it is all-inclusive. Not only does it have no opposite, it is impersonal and unconditional. In other words, that love does not focus on any distinct person, but rather on the divine essence of all persons, the indivisible reality of which those individuals are the manifestation. Such divine love does not result from an attachment to an individual, but is unconditional and all-embracing, and therefore has no opposite.

We humans experience both kinds of love—one kind more than the other, depending on our proclivities. The polar love, born often of a merely physical attraction to a particular individual, is common in our youth. When we are young, we fall in love quite readily, and through such frequent experiences we learn how easily this kind of love fades, and how easily it reverts to its polar opposite. Eventually, as we age and the desire for such unsatisfactory relationships wanes, we become more and more aware of the divine love that lives in our hearts, and which tends to flow outward to all beings equally and unconditionally. This love is of the nature of God and raises a soul upward to its Creator. It is a liberating love that requires nothing of its object but gives itself without demanding anything in return. It is the wholly satisfying gift of God that flows unceasingly from within us and sheds light on all whom it touches. It is this divine love that all of us are designed to experience and know within ourselves, as we evolve from the human to the divine.

* * *

23. Cake Tastes Nice No Matter How You Slice It (10-06-2015)

The reading of the words of Sri Ramakrishna, a nineteenth century mystic, had a profound effect on me when I was just being introduced to the spiritual reality at the beginning of my spiritual life. Sri Ramakrishna valued spiritual devotion in all its many forms. He recognized and honored all the religions in which the love of God was the central teaching. It didn't matter to him if the devotee called God by the name of Jehovah or Allah or Hari or Ram. 'God is one', he said, 'and He has many names.' Sri Ramakrishna never criticized the ideas of any religion because he saw all religions as the same; they were simply varied expressions of love for the one God. In expressing his understanding that the love of God is sweet regardless of the form that love takes, he said, "Cake tastes nice no matter how you slice it." In the moment I read those words, I understood everything; and my heart opened to His bliss. I became inebriated with love for God, and suddenly I could see the world around me as endless waves of Divine Consciousness. The words of a saint have that kind of power.¹

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NOTES:

1. A brief account of the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) may be found in my *History of Mysticism* (downloadable free on my website), p. 384. A fuller account may be found in Nikhilananda, Swami (trans.), *The Gospel Of Sri Ramakrishna*, N.Y., Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1942.

* * *

24. Reach Out To God (10-29-2015)

If you have read even a small portion of the writings featured on this website, you are well aware that it represents a viewpoint that is not only revolutionary but highly unpopular—unpopular in the sense that it goes against the view of the majority. In the books and articles featured here, the occurrence of my own revelatory experience of the Divine reality is described, and forms the basis for the assumption that any other devout human being is also capable of experiencing such a transcendent revelation—that, in fact, those who have experienced such a revelation in the past were also ordinary beings and not divinely begotten children or incarnations of the supreme deity—at least no more so than anyone else. This understanding flies in the face of the customary religious suppositions of a large number of people, I know; but old customs must eventually give way to proven experiential knowledge. The acceptance of mystical experience, and the recognition of its misinterpretation through the ages will certainly not come overnight; but eventually human evolution requires the expansion of human understanding through the acceptance of accumulated experiential evidence.

There is no shortage of evidence to show that many people throughout the world and throughout history have experienced the interior revelation of their own divine being; and if you are unaware of this evidence, please see my *History of Mysticism*, a factual account of that evidence (available as a free download from my website). Though, from the perspective of history, so many have testified to the occurrence of that revelation in their lives, it is, for us, a sad fact that so relatively few seem privileged to experience that revelation each day, month, and year during the limited time of our lives. In that regard, it is an experience that seems to be both common and yet rare. But it must be accepted as indisputably true that we are, each one, the manifestation of God's bounty, and are capable, each one, of knowing Him as our immortal Self through prayerful contemplation and a focused and mindful intent. His will is paramount; but if, by acting in accord with His will, you can affect, or in any way influence the course of His will, you must do so. Beg for His favor, implore His merciful gift of light, give your heart unreservedly to Him, surrender your life in His service; see all creation as His manifestation, and know your oneness with Him.

You will have noticed that I do not speak of temporal conditions in the world; I do not propose solutions for the worldly ills that are so apparent to all of us. These things will be remedied on their own if only we, the people, become transformed in

heart and mind to focus on God's loving presence in our own hearts. Surely, then, He will bless you and many others with the interior revelation of His ever-presence, and free you forevermore from all worry, distress, and sorrow. Reach out to Him with all the power of your mind and heart and soul, and He will surely grant your heart's desire.

* * *

25. My Love Affair (4-19-2016)

I have enjoyed a life-long love affair with God. Though He is always within me and I am always within Him, I pretend to be separate from Him in order to carry on this relationship. One day soon I shall shed this separateness and shall once again live everywhere as all-pervading Spirit; but, for now, I'm confined to operating exclusively in conjunction with this tired aging body and brain. I know that it is He who gives me life and thought and movement, and without Him no I exists. And so, when at last He leaves this body, it is I who shall leave it as well; it is I who shall shed these bodily limitations, and the happy culmination of our love affair will result in the dissolution of our pretended relationship. Then, I and Thou shall melt into one inclusive awareness and no longer exist as two separate identities.

'Thou' art my beloved, my father, my master, my larger self. Within me, Thou art the voice of both the seeker and the sought. Yet neither I nor Thou is ultimately real; only the one awareness into which these two imaginations must eventually dissolve is ultimately real. And yet, dear Father, how mysterious is this grand illusion in which an imaginary I seeks an imaginary Thou! How amazing is this love affair with all its yearning and desire that takes place wholly within one undivided awareness! Do you create this imaginary division within yourself only to enjoy the exciting drama of a loving relationship? Or does your only satisfaction come from bringing this imaginary I and Thou together at last in joyful union?

Help me to know Thy purposes, dear Father, and whatever is Thy will, may it bring Thee all possible joy and satisfaction. Let my will be the same as Thine, for Thy will alone is truly unfailing. I am grateful, dear Father, for all Thy many gifts and blessings throughout these many years, and I pray that all my errors and

failures may eventually be corrected, and that I will at last be made whole and perfect in Thee. Till this earthly illusion of separation is fully cast away and I know once again our inseparable unity, I remain Thy child, Thy lover, Thy servant.

* * *

26. Be Still And Know That I Am God (10-3-2016)

Years ago, I came across a quote attributed to Meister Eckhart, and though I don't know where among his copious writings this quote appears, or even if it is an authentic quote from the great Christian mystic, it is a sentiment that holds an important place in my own philosophy and is one that I frequently reflect upon and hold as a treasured rule. It is this: *"The very best and utmost attainment in this life is to remain still and let God act and speak in thee."* I believe implicitly in the truth of this quote, and I try to practice it in my own conduct every single day. Many is the time it has proven its value in the course of my life.

Implicit in this saying is the notion that there is more than one identity within each person's consciousness: ¹ one is an individual personal identity who is simply the active voice of our uncensored mind; and the other is a still, underlying identity who speaks and acts from a divine perspective—an identity whose voice, though subtle, can be ultimately trusted as that of God within us, our true Self. Our highest duty is to deliberately keep our active and uncensored mind quiet and at rest, and to allow God, our divine inner Self, to handle whatever needs to be said or done. This, of course, is not an easy accomplishment. It requires, first of all, a self-directed mindfulness that holds in check the impulse to speak or act on one's own without benefit of divine inspiration. We need also an unfailing trust that divine inspiration will come, if only we refrain from taking matters into our own hands when divine inspiration appears to be absent.

The "still, small voice" of that divine Self exists in everyone. It is heard and discerned only when we have resisted and put to rest our own scattered mental impulses, so that His voice alone may be heard. God wants to work in and through all of us, but He can do so only when we ourselves are silent and obedient to His will and His abiding wisdom. And when it comes time to withdraw into ourselves

in order to meditate or pray, we find these same two identities that constitute our active inner life, and our task remains the same: Silence that clamoring mental self by focusing on your true identity, your divine Self. The one making all the noise pretends to be you; but you are really the silent one, the one who knows without words the truth of who you really are. Abide in that everlasting Self.

* * *

III. DUALITY AND NONDUALITY

Because the universe is contained within God (where else could it be?), everything in the universe consists of God and nothing but God. In other words, there is only one thing, one existence, and that is God, the one divine Mind. This understanding comprises the perspective of Nonduality. But, of course, for most humans, the world appears as a Duality consisting of oneself—the subjective 'I', opposed by an objective world of many others. This apparent diversity, or multiplicity, comprises the mental perspective of Duality. In the creation of multiple phenomenal forms, God has created an appearance of many—each conscious living form possessing a sense of its own subjective individuality. But, from the perspective of Nonduality, all objects and beings are merely varied manifestations of the same one divine Mind. From that perspective, there is only one, and the appearance of many is a mere illusion.

The normal perspective of most people living on earth, however, remains one of Duality. Even their relationship to God is Dualistic—consisting of 'I' and 'Thou'. The rare perspective of Nonduality is most often found in those who have directly experienced the nonduality of existence through an interior revelation. This “mystical” revelation is a unitive experience that reveals to the recipient that the one Divine Mind is eternally his or her own true identity. Those who have experienced this interior revelation are especially convinced of the nonduality of existence and tend to regard all appearances of duality to be illusory and misleading.

1. Tale of The Two In One (8-7-2017)

God has always been. As an invisible Spirit, He is unborn and unending. But periodically He likes to take form in order to live multiple embodied lives within a multiformed universe. And, since He is the only Existence, if there is to be a universe of form, it must be produced from Himself. So, periodically, God manifests His own Energy in the form of a concentrated radiation of Light. And, as this Light spreads, It transforms into material wave-particles, which in turn become the many diverse forms that go to make up the physical universe.

But did you ever wonder how God, who is famous as the universal all-pervading Spirit, or Consciousness, can also manage to create, or manifest, an immense universe of 'material' forms? It seems incongruous, doesn't it? He is Spirit, yet He produces and reorganizes an incredible amount of Mass/Energy. These two qualitative definitions of Divinity seem to be distinctly alien to and incompatible with one another, presenting a perplexing conundrum that has baffled philosophers and theologians for many millennia. The solution to the conundrum that has surfaced in many different cultures throughout history is the recognition that God, though one, possesses two distinctly different aspects: He is the eternal Mind that serves as the absolute Ground of Consciousness in which all objects and beings are contained; *and* He is the Creative Power that produces an electromagnetic field of Energy that is capable of transforming itself into material wave-particles, which then aggregate into the elements and forces that go to make up the entire universe of objects and beings.

A God who possesses two separate and distinct aspects seems a bit fantastic, to be sure; but that is the conclusion reached by nearly everyone who has deeply pondered this question—including those, like myself, who have been graced with mystical vision. In that divine revelation, it is clearly revealed that the one Being constitutes both one's body and one's soul, both one's mind and one's 'physical' substance. There is seen to be only one existent, one contiguous reality identified as 'I', and yet It is *both* Spirit and the Energy that becomes Matter. To give human expression to this duality-in-unity for the purpose of rendering It comprehensible, these two—the invisible Spirit and the form-producing Energy—have been given many different names over the centuries, like *Purusha* and *Prakrti*, *Brahman* and *Maya*, *Shiva* and *Shakti*, *Jahveh* and *Chokmah*, *Haqq* and *Khalq*, *Theos* and *Logos*, *Godhead* and *Creator*, and many other names.

Here, however, we will continue to call them "Spirit" and "Energy", noting that the Energy is born of the Spirit, belongs to the Spirit, and that therefore the Spirit and Its Energy were never divided, were never two, but are simply two complementary aspects of the one Divine Self we call God. It is also important to note that it is that One, as Energy, who becomes our body, and it is that One, as Spirit, who becomes our soul. It is clearly evident, therefore, that we are, from head to foot, inwardly and outwardly, nothing else but God; that, in accord with His wishes, God is indeed living an embodied life within a multiformed universe *as us*. Isn't that awesome and marvelous!

* * *

2. The Metaphysics of Duality (4-25-2017, rev. 8-8-2017))

If we think carefully and accurately, we must come to the conclusion that God constitutes everything that exists. That being understood, it must also be understood that He exists in two different modes or aspects: He is the ultimate reality, the divine Mind, the one conscious Spirit—formless, invisible, and eternal, who exists as the conscious Self within all of us; *and* He is *also* the Creator who periodically projects His own Light-Energy that becomes the material particles that form the substance of the phenomenal universe in which we live.

So, we have an apparent duality within the nondual Reality: it is a duality between God and the world-substance, between Spirit and Matter. This apparent duality of Spirit and Matter is reiterated in the perceived duality of body and soul; but we must remember that both of these dualities are apparent only. God is both soul and body, both the invisible Spirit and the 'material' universe. He exists in two different modes; He has two different aspects: He is the eternal Spirit, the absolute Ground that constitutes our conscious Self; *and* He is *also* the projected Light-Energy projected fourteen billion years ago that gives form and 'material' substance to our world. So, while these two modes or aspects exist separately and independently, they are *both* God, they are both eternal. The material world with all its forms is indeed transient: it has a beginning and an end; but the Light-Energy of which it is constituted is nonetheless eternal. For, while the multiformed appearance that is the material universe is eventually dissolved back into the pure

Light of God of which it was made, that Light-Energy itself, by virtue of its divine nature, lives eternally in God.

I would like to propose a simple remedy to the confusion that often arises when discussing the nonduality that underlies the apparent duality: The one Spirit, the Divine Mind or Supreme Self, is to be regarded as “God I”; and the Light-Energy that constitutes the material world is to be regarded as “God II”. I feel that, with the implementation of this terminology, confusion will not arise, and it will become clear that there is only God I and God II, and that it is to be recognized hereafter that God, in His dual aspects, constitutes everything that exists.¹

* * *

NOTE:

1. I can't help thinking that, had Descartes truly understood that Mind and Body are both constituted of God, he would have found a solution to his Cartesian duality in the realization that the nondual One, while appearing to us to be a duality, is *in Itself* a single unified and integrated reality. This fact is not known through reason but is realized and subjectively confirmed in the mystical vision, for, as a soul experiences itself as the all-inclusive Divinity, it knows no distinction between its form and its essence, its body and its mind; all is in fact experienced as the one indivisible Self.

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3. Where Is God? (from *Reflections On The Soul*, 2010; rev. 7-10-14)

In the days before the modern revolution in astronomy and cosmology, back when the heavens were conceived in the old Aristotelian/Ptolemaic manner as concentric spheres within spheres, we knew where heaven was and where God dwelt. It was up there! All was one great multi-layered reality, enclosing both the terrestrial world and the heavenly world above. A stationary sphere, surrounding the fifty-five concentric transparent spheres rotating at different velocities, was the domain of the “Prime Mover”, God’s heaven. But today, the heavens are no longer beyond our ken: our telescopes reveal that the clusters of galaxies go on and on for billions of light-years; and heaven—the eternal abode of God—has been evicted from the upper regions of our universe. Today, we understand that the eternal abode of God upon which the universe of time and space is projected is a timeless, dimensionless realm of Consciousness coexisting with and underlying the physical world as its substratum. And while we can accurately determine particular locations in the physical universe, there is no method of determining the location of God’s place in His eternal realm. For God, and heaven itself, are *noumena*¹, spirit entities, having no physical location in time and space.

How, then, can we answer the question of ‘*Where* does God live? From whence did He fling forth this vast universe of space and time, and from where does He watch and govern the doings of creatures here on earth?’ One answer is, ‘Why, from right here, of course!’ God’s invisible Spirit-realm transcends our own time-bound spaces, to be sure; but these two, the noumenal and the phenomenal realms, the spiritual and the material, are nonetheless parallel, synchronous, and inseparable. All the heavenly bodies, and earth, and every human being is formed of, permeated and inhabited by the Divine; therefore, God is not in some distant heaven, but is here, co-habiting this universe, co-existing in and constituting this very present here and now.

God, the Divine Mind, is the causal agent for the production of the Energy of which universal matter consists, and so it is natural for us to regard Him as separate from, and other than, the material universe. But this universe—with you and I in it—is co-present with the Divine Mind. Though we use language suggestive of temporal and spatial relations, such as ‘emanated from’, or ‘dwelling within’, we must understand that the material world has

no spatio-temporal relationship to the Divine Mind, its noumenal substratum, but is *co-existent* and *co-present* with It. The Divine Mind is the Ground of which the universe is the figure. The universe is not somewhere outside It, or even “within” It; but is made of It, permeated by It and co-extensive with It.

All is indeed permeated by, encompassed by, and contained “in” the One. The Divine Mind acts as the bridge between eternity and time by sending forth Its Energy to become a substantial material world of spatio-temporal form superimposed “upon” Itself—the one eternal Consciousness. We err when we think of God as being in some distant realm apart from the universe He created. The two are not separate in place; they overlap, one superimposed, or “intraposed on” ² the other. The eternal One is the Spirit-Ground of all appearance. He is equally present everywhere. There is no place where He is not in His fullness. Truly, “in Him we live and move and have our being.”

The One is the *only* one. He is without a second. Strictly speaking, He has no ‘inside’ or ‘outside’; so, while we may say, figuratively, that all is ‘contained within’ Him, there is really no spatial relationship such as “within” for the noumenal. The Divine Mind is the creative faculty of the One, but we cannot say that it is “within” Him either. Terms of spatial relationship, such as “within” or “outside of”, are applicable to phenomena, but not to noumena. Nevertheless, the Divine Mind cannot be separated from the One. Can you separate the creative power of your own mind from your consciousness? I don’t think so. Your mind’s creative power is integral to your consciousness. Likewise, the attempt to separate the creative Power (the Divine Mind, God) from the transcendent Absolute (the One, the Godhead,) is futile. His power of creating is inherent and integral to Him. They are not two. Recall the Biblical dictum: “I am the one Lord. There is no other beside Me.” ³

Plotinus spoke of the ‘emanation’ of Soul *from* the Divine Mind, but we mustn’t be deluded into thinking that this connotes an exterior out-flowing, similar to the case of photons of light streaming from the Sun in the material universe. Nothing is *outside of* or *other than* the Divine Mind. The relation of Soul to the Divine Mind is not a spatial one; they are not two. As the various thoughts in one man’s mind exist together in that mind, so do all souls exist together in the Divine Mind. In short, we are merged in God; everything is merged in God. How could it be otherwise? Where else could we be?

We are able to see God ‘reflected’ in and as the phenomenal world around us, but it is only within our own souls that we are able to *know* Him directly. This is because it is the conscious Soul in us that is, in fact, the Divine Mind, the all-pervading Spirit. That self into which we look is truly none other than Him. His Consciousness is our consciousness. We are comprised of His awareness and His Light-energy. He is both our conscious awareness and our form, comprising both the fabric and the sentience of our existence. If we could see into our nature clearly, we would realize that we ourselves are entirely Divine. Nothing else but God exists; every form is His own. No other ‘you’ exists but Him.

God, being so close, is easily accessible to us;
 He is always within the reach of our call,
 Always ready to provide succor in our need,
 And the light of wisdom in our times of darkness.
 Our own soul is the conduit of this accessibility,
 This communication, this succor and this wisdom.
 In our own soul, when the chattering of the mind is silenced,
 And all our attention is focused on His presence,
 There He is found in the very qualities of the soul;
 For we are rays from His brilliance,
 Diminished only by our hesitance
 To manifest His light.

He is the air in our nostrils and the earth under our feet.
 He is the light of our eyes and the music in our breast.
 He is the bright awareness that lives as you,
 And He is the storied tale your living tells.
 You dance in His firelight; you float on His sea.
 You breathe by His breathing; you move by His joy.

No matter how far you may gaze into the rolling
 Galaxies cascading above;
 No matter what dark or clownish scenes you dream,
 Or terrestrial landscapes you cross;
 Whether in the depths of the ocean, or on the chilly
 Snow-peaked mountains,
 And even in the abyss of death and darkness,
 You are ever within His close embrace.

You cannot leave Him, nor scamper from His sight.
 For you are in Him as a fish is in the ocean
 Or a bird is in the sky.
 His love surrounds and holds you,
 And He sees all through your eyes.

* * *

NOTES:

1. The word, *noumenon*, or *noumena* (pl.) is intended in the sense in which it was understood in classical Greece, as a derivative of *nous*, or ‘mind’, and signifies those things that exist solely as mind or thoughts of the mind (See Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Book I, Chapter 13, ‘What is thought [*noumena*] is opposed to what appears or is perceived [*phenomena*].’). This division is specifically applicable when we are speaking of the thought-production of the Divine Mind (eg., *Nous* in Platonist philosophy): *noumena* are immaterial entities, such as the Divine Mind itself, ‘souls’, or ‘heaven’, whose existence can only be apprehended by a special, non-sensory, faculty that some have called ‘intellectual intuition’, and others refer to as ‘spiritual perception’ or ‘mystical vision’.

The eighteenth-century philosopher, Immanuel Kant, attempted to alter our modern usage of the word, *noumena*, through his book, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant believed that, even if such immaterial entities as *noumena* existed, there was no reliable sensory or non-sensory human faculty by which they could be apprehended and known. He therefore reassigned the word, *noumenon*, which had long meant a mind or mind-born reality, to mean the signification of any thing—not as it appears to our senses and understanding, but as that thing is *in itself*—thus intending to render the word inapplicable as a useful human term or concept. In fact, Kant only succeeded in proving the sad fact that he himself had not been graced with spiritual vision and was therefore unable to speak knowledgeably on the subject of *noumena*.

2. You will have noticed that I used the words “on” and “upon” to suggest the relationship of the universe and God. That’s because it is almost impossible to avoid words that suggest a physical relationship between them. As illustration of how ill-suited phenomenally-based language is to describe

noumenal realities—such as the relationship of the eternal to the temporal—try to come up with a word in the English language that indicates the simultaneous presence of a noumenal and a phenomenal reality existing in the same place. Shankara called it a “superimposition”; but even that word does not fit the reality perfectly.

3. “I am the one Lord. There is no other beside Me,” from the Old Testament, *Second Isaiah*: 45:4; probably borrowed from the Egyptian “Papyrus of Ani”, dating from the 30th century B.C.E. (Budge, Wallis, *Egyptian Religion*, N.Y., University Books, 1959; pp. 37-40), wherein is found the following text:

“God is one and alone, and none other exists with Him; God is the One, the one who has made all things. ...He has endured for countless ages, and He shall endure to all eternity. God is a spirit, ... the Divine Spirit. He is a mystery to His creatures, and no man knows how to know Him. ... He has made the universe, and He has created all that is in it; He has stretched out the heavens and founded the earth. What His heart conceived came to pass straightway, ... and it shall endure forever.

God, Himself, is existence. He lives in all things and lives over all things. ...He multiplies Himself millions of times, and He possesses multitudes of forms and multitudes of members. God is life, and it is only through Him that man lives. ... God is merciful unto those who reverence Him, and He hears those who call upon Him. He protects the weak against the strong, and He hears the cry of him that is bound in fetters. ...God knows those who know Him; He rewards those who serve Him, and He protects those who follow Him.”

* * *

4. Oneness (from *The Wisdom of Vedanta*; 1991; rev. 8-19-2017)

The one Reality is called, in a Sanskrit phrase, *Chit-Shakti Vilas*, “the play of Consciousness-Energy.” This phrase, *Chit-Shakti*, is an interesting one, in that it stands for the one Reality, and yet it is made up of two words: *Chit* (“Consciousness”) and *Shakti* (“Energy.”) These are the two aspects of Reality with which we have become familiar as *Shiva-Shakti*, *Brahman-Maya*, *Purusha-Prakrti*, *Theos-Logos*, etc. *Chit*, or Consciousness, is in other contexts called *Shiva*, the absolute and formless aspect, the transcendent Godhead; and *Shakti*, or Energy, is the creative aspect of that one Consciousness which manifests as the multi-formed universe. They are one, but they appear to be two. The two are but complementary aspects of the same one indivisible Truth.

These complimentary aspects are frequently symbolized as Male and Female. He—that is, the masculine aspect of God—is the world-transcending Absolute. He is the pure and stainless Consciousness that is the source of His own manifestory Power. He is the eternal One, beyond all dualities, beyond all predication; He is known by those to whom He reveals Himself as the Unmanifest. But this stainless Consciousness possesses a Creative Power. And with that Power It periodically produces an Energy that manifests as a universe of time, space, and material forms. That Power of manifestation could be characterized as the Breath of God, which is in turn exhaled and then inhaled back again. Between the contraction and re-expansion of this universal manifestation, there is a period of stillness, in which His manifestory Power rests within Himself. This manifestory Power, this Matter-producing faculty, is often regarded as the Female aspect of God. It is the creative movement that arises within the Absolute Mind, and it is everything that this creative movement produces. Within this creative production, which we call the universe, these two aspects of God are given symbolic representation in the form of creatures designated as male and female.

Though a universe of form is made manifest by this (Female) Power, He (the Source) never becomes anything other than the eternally pure Consciousness. Just as the human consciousness (which is His likeness) remains unaffected by the millions of thoughts that pass across its face, or as the pure sky remains unaffected by the myriads of clouds that drift by, that pure Consciousness produces a vast universe of Thought-forms, and yet remains in Himself unchanged, unmoved. Just as the human consciousness witnesses in full awareness the play of thoughts as

they arise and disperse within it, so does He witness in full awareness the universal play in all its detailed convolutions. And as the human consciousness lives in its thoughts, being their source and witness, so does He live in His creative exuberance of universal Thought-Energy. This exuberance is His own. It has no existence apart from Him; He is its Soul and substance. Still, the One has these two aspects: It is the one pure and eternal Consciousness (the "Father"), and It is the creative Power of manifestation (the "Mother"), just as we human "images" of God contain the same two aspects to our being. And so, God (Reality) is both Male and Female, both God and Goddess, both *Purusha* and *Prakrti*, both *Chit* (or *Shiva*) and *Shakti*.

Listen to how the 13th century sage, Jnaneshvar, describes them:

"The Shakti cannot live without her Lord, and without her, He (Shiva, the absolute Consciousness) cannot appear. Since He appears because of Her, and She exists because of her Lord, the two cannot be distinguished at all. Sugar and its sweetness cannot be told apart, nor camphor and its fragrance. If we have the flame, we have the fire as well; if we catch hold of Shakti, we have Shiva also.

"... Shiva and Shakti are the same, like air and its motion, or gold and its luster. Fragrance cannot be separated from the musk, nor heat from fire; neither can Shakti be separated from Shiva." ¹

The whole world of apparent phenomena is the manifestation of the Shakti of Shiva. Shiva is our innermost consciousness, our very Self; and Shakti, therefore, is our own creative power, our power of will. By its very existence, an apparent duality is created in That which is one. From this original duality comes the duality of seer and seen, or subject and object. It is because of this apparent duality, this imaginary division in the One, that the world-appearance continues to exist. Nonetheless, the truth of the matter is that it is one Being who is playing all the roles; He is the Director, the stage Manager, the actors, and the scenery. He is the stage, and He is the audience of this play as well. There is nothing outside of God. This is brought out in the story of the egoistic king who asked his Minister, "Who is greater, me or God?" And the wise Minister replied, "You are, O King! For you can banish anyone from your kingdom, but God cannot banish anyone from His kingdom."

It is not possible to leave God's kingdom. The only thing that really *is* is that one Being; He is both the unchanging Absolute, the Unity, and the world-appearance as well. He is both Shiva and Shakti. For, as we've seen, you can't have one without the other; they form an inseparable unit. And so the question, "Who am I?" is readily answered: "I am the one Reality. I am *Chit-Shakti*, and all this is my play!" It is, of course, important to experience this truth; but it's perhaps just as important to understand it and to make this knowledge a part of one's being. This is not just philosophy or theorizing. It is very important to fully comprehend this; otherwise, who knows what you might imagine yourself to be? Perhaps you will regard yourself as only a weak and insignificant creature!

Because the final and ultimate Truth is unity, is oneness, all talk of duality is misleading. In our very good intentions of making the truth understandable to others, we like to describe the dual aspects of the One in order to explain the relationship between the Transcendent and the Immanent, the Absolute and the Relative, the Unity and the Diversity. And from there we go on to delineate all the limbs and subtle layers, and so forth; and before we know what has happened, we're immersed once again in the swamp of multiplicity.

The initial conceptual division of the One into two (*Purusha-Prakrti*, *Brahman-Maya*, *Chit-Shakti*, etc.) is the intellectually tempting pathway leading into this swamp. And almost every mystical philosopher and metaphysician finds himself beguiled by the apparent usefulness of exploring this pathway. But, since the ultimate Truth is unity, and always unity, we are much better off adhering bull-doggedly to One and only One, without allowing for the slightest admission of duality or mention of even an *apparent* division in It. For this reason, the author of the Biblical book of Second Isaiah, as a counter to those who would dissect reality into good and evil, Jehovah and Satan, Light and Darkness, put these words in the mouth of God: "I am the one Lord; there is no other beside Me. I form the light and create the darkness; I make peace and create evil. I, the one Lord, do all these things."

Let's look for a moment, from the historical perspective, and see what happens when we begin dabbling with "two-ness." In the *Yajurveda*, we find the statement, "The One becomes the many by Its own inherent power." This seems innocent enough. Everyone can see that "Its own inherent power" is not an entity separate from the One; it is just an inherent quality. A little later, however, we find in the *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, "Brahman projects the universe through the power of His

Maya. Then He becomes entangled in that universe of Maya. Know, then, that the world is Maya, and that the great God is the Lord of Maya.”

Uh oh! Now, we have established a definite pair! Here, we have the Lord *and* His Maya. From the smallest seed, duality has sprung up as a full tree of contention. We have forgotten that “Maya” simply refers to His “inherent power” of manifestation, and we have begun to see “the Lord” and “His power” as two separate and distinct entities. Do you not see how craftily and insidiously this imaginary separation has taken place? Once you have a “Lord,” you have a “servant” as well.

By the time of the *Bhagavad Gita*, this dualism has taken a firm hold on the mind. We hear Krishna saying, in the 13th chapter, to Arjuna: “He sees truly who sees that all actions are performed by *Prakrti* (i.e., Shakti, or Maya), and that the *Purusha* (Shiva or Brahman) is actionless.” Now, this is a very useful concept for understanding that one’s eternal Self remains constant, inactive, and unchanged, even while one’s body and mind engages in actions; but a split is being established which will prove to be very difficult to patch up again.

The great Nondualist philosopher and sage, Shankaracharya, though quite aware of their underlying unity, describes “the two” in such a way as to widen the division between them. He says:

“Maya... is the power of the Lord. It is she who brings forth this universe. She is neither real nor unreal, nor partaking of both characteristics; neither the same as the Lord, nor different, nor both; neither composed of parts nor an indivisible whole nor both. She is most wonderful and cannot be described in words.” ²

Now, let’s look at what’s happened so far: The Lord emanates the universe by His inherent Power. And suddenly, we are saying that He is real, but the universe and the Lord’s Power by which the universe exists are both unreal! Can we say that the Sun is real, but its rays are unreal? No; of course not. But, let’s not be unfair to Shankaracharya; it should be perfectly clear that he was merely pointing out that the Godhead, the formless Absolute, is *eternally* real, while the manifestation known as “the universe” is only *temporarily* real. And, to this, we all agree. But, can we say that the Lord’s inherent “Power of manifestation” is also only temporarily real? No. His Power, His *Shakti*, His *Maya*, though it may indeed become inactive and dormant, is co-eternal with Shiva; it is inherent. It is never

something separate or independent of the Lord, any more than wetness can be thought of as separate or independent of water, or any more than the power to think can be thought of as independent of the mind. He, the Lord, and She, His Power, were never divided, were never two; and only confusion can result by allowing this mistaken impression to stand.

It was with just such an objection to Shankara's descriptive language that, in the 9th and 10th centuries, the authors of the literature of Kashmir Shaivism began to rephrase and reformulate the philosophy of Unity. As we shall see, however, there is really no satisfactory solution to the problem of expressing in language That which exceeds the capabilities of language. In every time, in every culture, the seers of the One have attempted to explain in a satisfactory way the fact that the universe is God, and yet is not God; that He is eternal, and yet lives in the temporal; that He is forever unchanging, and yet is manifest as the ever-changing universe.

Jnaneshvar, in the 13th century, likewise felt impelled to object to the language of Shankara, and to attempt to do away with such concepts as "Maya," and "superimposition." In his *Amritanubhav*, he says:

"When it is always only the one pure Consciousness seeing Itself, why postulate the necessity of a superimposition? ... By His very nature, He *is* whatever He sees. Whatever form appears, appears because of Him. There is nothing else here but the Self.

"... In the current of the river or the waves of the sea, there is nothing but water. Similarly, in the universe, nothing else exists besides the Self.

"... Therefore, whether He is the seer or the seen, it doesn't matter; there is only the Self vibrating everywhere." ³

Again, in his *Changadev Pasashti*, Jnaneshvar says: "Only Oneness is real. All else is a dream!" ⁴ And yet, we must ask the question, "What all else?" And the answer can only be, "the appearance of multiplicity!" And this, of course, is precisely what Shankara had said: "Only Brahman is real; the world (the appearance of multiplicity) is illusory." So, you see, it is not possible to solve this question of how to talk about the (apparent) duality in Unity. This is why, in India, there are so many authentic schools of mystical thought. There is the *Advaita*, the

Nondualism of Shankara; there is the *Dvaita*, or Dualist, school of Madhva; there is the *Vishishtadvaita*, or Qualified Nondualism of Ramanuja. All speak the truth, and yet each sees the Truth a little bit differently. But that's okay. The built-in ambiguity of language demands alternate expressions. Still, the ultimate Truth, the final Reality, known by the seers, is One without a second. All duality is apparent only. We can say that it is simply the "Play of Consciousness-Energy," *Chit-Shakti Vilas*.

So much for correct understanding! It is necessary to pass beyond understanding if we are to *experience* the joy of Unity, the bliss of God. This Bliss is not attained by engaging the mind in trying to comprehend the nature of God—though this has its place, of course. The bliss of God is attained through devotion. Devotion leaves the intellect far behind; in fact, it is possible only through the abandonment of the pride of intellect. It is more akin to the longing of a child for its mother than to the ratiocination of the adult. Devotion begins with the awareness of one's utter dependency upon God for everything, and an open upturning of one's mind and inner gaze to the Source of all mind and all vision.

We engage our minds so often in circuitous analysis and repetitious thought-patterns. Far better would it be if we could build into our minds the thought-pattern of calling on God for our succor and support. He is capable of filling the mind and body with ecstasy and light, and of setting our minds at peace in perfect understanding. All that is required is a pure and innocent heart, and a simple and steady regard to Him for all our satisfaction and reward.

As the mind becomes steady and one-pointed on God, all questions become answered automatically. A mind at peace is a mind illumined by Truth. Let there be an apparent duality between you and your Lord! But keep on trying to close the gap through love. Talk to Him. Pray to Him. Give all your life and love to Him. And the God within you will manifest the more as you become engrossed in Him. You become what you meditate on; so, meditate on God. Regard Him as the only Reality and become as a moth dancing about His flame. Yearn to be immersed in His perfect light, His perfect love, and He will draw you into Himself and make you know your eternal oneness with Him.

Meditation

The Latin phrase, *E Pluribus Unum*, is the motto of our country. It means, “Of many, one.” But, it would be closer to the truth to say, “Of One, many.” This simple formula explains everything we need to know about the Reality in which we live. For, just as the one white light is refracted to appear as the entire spectrum of colors in a rainbow, so does the one undivided Existence appear as a multitude of forms. Just as a sunflower spreads itself out in its many tender petals, so God spreads Himself out into this variously formed creation. Just as the ocean raises up from itself a tossing surface of countless waves, so the ocean of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss raises up from Itself countless individual forms of life from shore to shore.

In every single form the One alone exists; it is He alone who lives in every life. However wise, however foolish, however attractive, however repulsive—the tiger and the scorpion, the spider and the snake—all is His Life, playing in a million fantastic forms. And we, children of His mind, images projected from His light upon Himself, wander here and there upon His screen, playing out our roles, forgetful of the One in whose dance of Light we live. But when we turn within, behold! We discover as our very essence that One who lives as many, the heart and soul of all that lives, the blissful God whose life and breath we are. ⁵

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NOTES:

1. *Jnaneshvar: The Life And Works of The Celebrated 13th Century Indian Mystic-Poet, Amritanubhav*: I:21-24, 41, 42; Abhayanaanda, 1989, p. 116.
2. Shankara, *Vivekachudamani*, III:7; Prabhavananda, & Isherwood, Vedanta Press, 1978, p. 49.
3. Jnaneshvar, *Amritanubhav*, 7:165, 233, 235, 237, 244; Abhayanaanda, 1989, pp. 186, 193-195.
4. Jnaneshvar, *Changadev Pasashti*, 25; Abhayanaanda, 1989, p. 240.

5. The book, *The Wisdom of Vedanta*, containing this and many other excellent articles, may be downloaded in its entirety as a PDF document from the “Read or Download” page of my website: www.themysticsvision.com.

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5. The Real (5-2-2016)

When I awakened to the One,
All the opposites had vanished.
No I, no Thou, no now, or then.
Sound, silence, living, dead—
None of these remained;
Only a sweet Awareness
Filled the wondrous undivided space.

That eternal Awareness alone is real;
Individual life is but a temporary illusion
That comes and goes, inventing time.
Inconceivably, unimaginably,
The Real alone abides:
No opposites within It.

The one eternal Awareness is absolute;
All the pairs of opposites
Exist only in your mind.
They are dependent upon the existence
Of your individual perspective.

We each comprise an individual perspective
That we call our ego.
All of the opposites—you, me; up, down; left, right;
East, west; hot, cold; true, false; etc.—exist only
Because of that individual perspective.

Even past and future, as well as the now,
Is relative to our individual perspective;
But none of those contraries even exist in the Real.

That eternal Awareness alone is real;
Individual life is but a temporary illusion
That comes and goes, inventing time.

* * *

6. This Is The Truth (12-31-13)

This is the truth: Nowhere is there anything other than God.
This world is a drama performed by one actor in a multitude of roles.
We, His distinctly variant roles, are nothing but Him!
What can we do but dance to His tune?
He has made Himself into all these worlds and all these beings,
And we are but His manifold forms.
Though we appear to be independent entities,
Our characteristics and our inclinations are all programmed by Him,
And enacted by Him.
Everything being done is being done by God!

Whatever is to be done in the future will also be done by Him;
And so, glory be to God—in the highest and in the lowest!
Glory be to the One who lives as you and who lives as me!
Waves on His ocean, we think we're distinctly our own,
Unaware that we're forever inseparable from Him.
Calling Himself "I", He lives us, He breathes us.
Only in the depths of His Grace are we able to know peace.

* * *

7. Iraqi's Glimpses of Truth (from *History of Mysticism*, 1987)

In the search for the Divine, we all go through an initial process of reasoning. Once we become aware that all is God, it becomes clear that there is no “me”. And we begin the process of clarifying our thinking about who we are. In the thirteenth century, there lived in Persia (modern day Iran) a man named Iraqi (1213-1289) who put his own thinking into verse in a poem called *Lama'at* (“Glimpses”). Here are a few selected verses from that celebrated work. For more about Iraqi, see my *History of Mysticism*:

Beloved, I sought You here and there,
Asked for news of You from all I met.
Then I saw You through myself,
And found we were identical.
Now I blush to think I ever searched
For signs of You. ¹

By day I praised You, but never knew it;
By night I slept with You without realizing it,
Fancying myself to be myself;
But no, I was You and never knew it. ²

“O You who are so unbearably beautiful,
Whose beloved are You?” I asked.
“My own,” He replied;
“For I am one and one alone—
Love, lover, beloved, mirror, beauty, eye!” ³

I sought solitude with my loved one,
Yet find there is no one here but myself.
And if there were a “someone else,”
Then, truly, I should not have attained her. ⁴

When I clutched at His skirt,
I found His hand in my sleeve. ⁵

I am the one I love;
 He whom I love is I.
 Two, yet residing in a single body. ⁶

If I have become the Beloved,
 Who is the lover?
 Beloved, Love and lover—three in one;
 There is no place for union here,
 So, what is this talk of “separation?” ⁷

What He takes,
 He takes with His own hand from Himself;
 What He gives,
 He gives from Himself to Himself. ⁸

Hunter, prey, bait, and trap;
 Candle, candlestick, flame, and moth;
 Beloved, lover, soul, and soul’s desire;
 Inebriation, drinker, wine, and cup—
 All is He! ⁹

Is it You or I—this reality in the eye?
 Beware, beware of the word, “two.” ¹⁰

“I” and “You” have made of man a duality;
 Without these words,
 You are I and I am You. ¹¹

He speaks;
 He listens.
 “You” and “I” are but a pretense. ¹²

When shall You and I divorce ourselves
 So that “You” and “I” are gone,
 And only God remains? ¹³

If You are everything,
 Then, who are all these people?

And if I am nothing,
 What's all this noise about?
 You are the Totality;
 Everything is You. Agreed!
 Then, all that is "other-than-You"—
 What is it?
 Oh, indeed I know, nothing exists but You!
 But, tell me, whence all this confusion? ¹⁴

He Himself speaks of Truth;
 He Himself listens.
 He Himself shows Himself;
 He Himself sees. ¹⁵

The world but seems to be,
 Yet it is only a blending of light and shade.
 Discern the meaning of this dream;
 Discriminate between time and Eternity.
 All is nothing, nothing.
 All is He. All is He. ¹⁶

Listen, riffraff: Do you want to be ALL?
 Then go, go and become nothing. ¹⁷

You are nothing when you wed the One;
 But, when you truly become nothing,
 You are everything. ¹⁸

Regard yourself as a cloud drifting before your Sun;
 Detach yourself from the senses,
 And behold your intimacy with the Sun. ¹⁹
 If you lose yourself on this path,
 Then you will know for sure:
 He is you, and you are He. ²⁰

NOTES:

1. Chittock, W.C. & Wilson, Peter L. (trans.), *Fakhruddin Iraqi: Divine Flashes*, N.Y., Paulist Press, 1982; p. 120.

2. *Ibid.*; p. 124
3. *Ibid.*; p. 111
4. *Ibid.*; p. 95
5. *Ibid.*; p. 117
6. *Ibid.*; p. 125
7. *Ibid.*; p. 76
8. *Ibid.*; p. 96
9. *Ibid.*; p. 110
10. *Ibid.*; p. 77
11. *Ibid.*; p. 103
12. *Ibid.*; p. 80
13. *Ibid.*; p. 127
14. *Ibid.*; p. 99
15. *Ibid.*; p. 80
16. *Ibid.*; p. 119
17. *Ibid.*; p. 10
18. *Ibid.*; p. 112
19. *Ibid.*; p. 123
20. *Ibid.*; p. 120

* * *

8. The Only One (10-12-2016)

The false ‘I’—the individual person we think we are—doesn’t really exist! It’s merely a mental phenomenon, an imaginary being. The true ‘I’—the only one who really exists—is the all-pervading Spirit. That is your only true identity. You are That. I am That. We imagine that we have a separate and distinct identity, but it is the one Spirit alone who is living as you and as me. So—can you grasp it? When the sage asks you to inquire “Who am I?” he’s asking you to become aware of the divine Reality who is the true and everlasting identity of everyone.¹

Though you are unable at this time to know your Self as all-pervading, the truth is that you are in the clouds, and you are in the gritty soil. You are the pulse of the turtle; you are the clanging bells of joy that thrill the hearts of all who know joy. It is you that stirs in the heart as a rising song; it is your love that flows throughout the world. Here, there, everywhere, it is you alone who exists.

Whether you objectify that all-pervading Divinity as other—as ‘He’—or know that divine Self as ‘I’ within, the divine Reality is all there is in this world and beyond. ‘He’ and ‘I’ are the same. It’s true: ‘I’ and ‘the Father’ are one. Say it in your heart, and know it is true. Whatever name stirs you to remembrance of the one divine Spirit—sing that name in your heart and let the blissful awareness of His endless presence continually fill your soul.

* * *

NOTE:

1. It’s true that we come into this world individualized as separate and distinct souls. But all souls are composed of the one underlying Divinity, the all-pervading Spirit. And, in the unitive experience of the mystic, the veil of separateness is lifted, the distinct individuality of the soul is transcended, and the soul awakens to the awareness that its true and everlasting identity is the one all-pervading Divine Reality.

* * *

9. Advaita—Experience Or Understanding? (8-24-13)

In the 20th century, there were a few enlightened men, such as Sri Ramana Maharshi and Nisargadatta Maharaj, who had both received a mind-transcending experience of the nondual Reality in their youth, but whose later teachings seemed to some to imply that the nondual (*advaita*) Reality could be known through deliberate intellectual enquiry.

This controversy may be easily resolved if we examine how the word, *advaita*, is commonly used. It is a Sanskrit word, which, literally, means “not two”, but it is generally used to stand for both “nonduality” and “nondualism”. To illustrate this, let us look at several official definitions of the word: First definition, from the Britannica Concise Encyclopedia: “Advaita (Sanskrit: Nondualism) Most influential school of Vedanta... etc.” Second definition, from the Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy: “advaita (Sanskrit, nonduality) The doctrine of the Vedantic school associated with Shankara, that asserts the identity of Brahman and

atman... etc.” And the third definition, from the Oxford Dictionary of Asian Mythology: “Literally, ‘nondual’, *advaita* is the Hindu term for the state of nondifferentiation that is *Brahman* or the absolute reality.”

When used with “Vedanta”, *advaita* refers to “the philosophy of Nondual Vedanta”, or, simply “Nondualism”; it can also mean “Nonduality”, a synonym for the absolute reality, or *Brahman*. So, we have two meanings for the same word: *nonduality* and *nondualism*. The first is an experiential state; the second is a philosophical position. Admittedly, *Advaita* (Nondualism), the philosophical term, may indeed be understood; but *Advaita*, when we mean by it: “nonduality”—the nondual reality, the thing in itself—, cannot be understood. It must be experienced to be known.

That undifferentiated state where there is neither ‘I’ nor ‘Thou’ may be experienced in transcendent vision, but it cannot be understood by the mind. The state in which there is neither ‘now’ or ‘then’ may be experienced in transcendent vision, but it cannot be understood by the mind. The state in which neither ‘here’ nor ‘there’ exists cannot be understood by the mind. The mind and the language it uses is grounded in duality; duality is its mechanism, its being. With what instrument would one *understand* nonduality? It cannot be understood by the mind. However, Nonduality has been *experienced* by many throughout history—including myself. Nonduality, therefore, is, by definition, a transcendent *experience*, a divine revelation, beyond the temporal mind.

It must be reported, however, that the opinion that *Advaita* is unequivocally an *understanding*, arrived at through reflection, and not a transcendent *experience*, has become a widely-held one among some students of enlightenment centered in the U.K. On the Advaita.org website, hosted by Dennis Waite, a questioner who “had a profound realization of the truth of advaita” and then, after some months, no longer experienced it, was corrected by several different disciples who set out to impress upon him the doctrine that *advaita* was *not* an experience, but an understanding. (See [www.advaita.org.uk/ Q.348 – Temporary Realization/](http://www.advaita.org.uk/Q.348-Temporary-Realization/), Posted on August 4, 2013).

Advaita (nondualism) is an understanding; *advaita* (nonduality) is definitely not a matter of understanding; it is a matter of revelation. Ideas may be understood. Concepts may be understood. We can understand the idea, the concept, of nondualism, but we cannot *understand* nonduality. ‘Understanding’ is a subjective process of the mind. Those who have obtained an intellectual

understanding that the universe is an undivided unity, that there are not two things (I and Thou, Spirit and Matter), but only one, have attained a wonderful understanding, to be sure; but it cannot hold a candle to the experience of seeing that nondual Reality through the eyes of eternity—even if in time our memory of the details of that vision may fade.

Philosophers have attempted through the ages to ‘understand’ the nondual Reality, and in the end have had to surrender and take their place among the many vanquished souls who have followed the dead-end road of reason, and never reached their goal. For satisfaction does not lie down that road. The intellect turns out to be an inappropriate and useless instrument in the hunt for the knowledge of Reality, in the quest for the divine Self. Inevitably we must come to the realization that the intellect is impotent to discover God (the non-dual Reality), or to comprehend His ways. And with that realization comes also the sweet acceptance of the truth that only He can reveal His immediate and all-embracing presence, and show to the inner eye, beyond all thought or conceptualization, the inconceivable clarity of the undivided oneness of being. The intellect must be put aside, and we must look childlike into the emptiness within, and listen for the voiceless voice to speak. Only then may understanding arise, as the Sun effortlessly arises at dawn.

* * *

10. Christmas Message 2014 (12-16-14)

We do not see the transcendent God, and yet we see His handiwork. It is only natural, therefore, that we think of God as being somewhere else, far above us, as a king is above his subjects. Since ancient times, when primitive men roamed the earth, God has been regarded as a transcendent overlord, separate from this world and its creatures, who dwells in some distant yet ever-present heavenly realm. But what marvelous news! When He finally lifts the veil and reveals Himself to His devotee, God is seen to be all-pervasive! He is seen to be the very fabric of one’s being, the sole Identity of everyone. It is this knowledge that illumined Jesus, prompting him to declare ‘I and the Father are one!’ This was not the result of Jesus’ unique paternity, nor was it some wild fantasy by which Jesus was deluded; it was the realization of the hidden truth by which Jesus became enlightened!

To a devoted person who calls out lovingly to His God, it is not immediately apparent that he himself is a manifestation of God; but when God reveals Himself within, that person knows his own deathless Self, his own oneness with God, and knows that nothing else exists in this world but that One. God has spread Himself out as this vast universe, and He is immediately present as our own selves, accessible through our own conscious minds. God is the life that lives you; He flows through that life in every breath. He is the joy that thrills your soul, and He is the sweet awareness of being that fills you. Remember Him and praise Him in every thought and word and know every moment that He is manifest as you, that you are nothing else but His own divine Self.

* * *

11. Look Around You! **(7-25-2-15)**

Without any doubts, this world, this vast universe, is made *by* God, *of* God, and resides *in* God. For there is no other Reality but Him. God is the one all-inclusive Spirit, or Mind, in whom everything and everyone has its being. This truth has been clearly revealed through Grace to countless individual souls in an enlightening inner vision. If there was something else—something other than Him, it is in that divine inner vision that we would learn of it. But it is there, in that divine revelation, that we learn that we are made of God-stuff, that there is nothing else! We learn that it is the One Great Mind who brings all to light, and that it is He in whom everything resides and of whom everything consists. There, by His Grace, we learn our oneness with Him. There, two-ness cannot even arise as an imagination. You will be happy to know that, by searching for Him within, you too can experience His Grace. You too can know Him as the one and only Reality and solve this great riddle of Nonduality conclusively for yourself.

Look around you! Do you not see that every blade of grass is bursting with Consciousness? Do you not see that every chunk of gravel is alive with Consciousness? Do you not see how perfectly timed the planets move, how the Sun and moon tell the unveiling of the moments in your life?

O what good fortune is this—to see with the eyes of the Divine, to bathe in the bliss of His living presence, to delight in the heavenly breezes wafting in the summer light! Look around you!

* * *

12. Karma (10-30-2015)

When someone says, “That’s just your karma,” what do they mean? *Karma* is a Sanskrit word, meaning “actions” or “the result of actions.” And so, we can translate the above statement to “The present condition of your life is just the result of your previous actions.” And if the statement seemed vague at first, it is now perfectly clear and acceptable. The current state of our lives *is* the result of our karma. The sum of all those decisions and actions throughout our lives has resulted in our current life situation. It may also be assumed that our present karma determines what we are to become in a subsequent lifetime. In my own case, I see that my commitment to service in praise of God has focused my life in a particular direction, eliminating those commitments that appeared to conflict with that paramount commitment, and bringing me to a particular life situation: though my life is a solitary and somewhat penurious one, it is a life of great satisfaction, freedom, and contentment. All those conditions are karmic; i.e., they are, without a doubt, the results of *my own* actions.

However, we must delve a little deeper, and also ask ‘What is the underlying *cause* or *source* of the predominant life decisions that resulted in those actions that constitute our karma?’ In my own case, my overriding commitment to service in praise of God derived solely from the Grace of God that so strongly influenced—and can truly be said to have *caused*—my desire to praise Him. The point is that, although my actions are my own, and can be said to constitute *my* karma, all that has occurred in my life, including the sum of my decisions and my actions, is in fact the result of the actions of God. As the Godhead, He is the transcendent Absolute, the One without a second, completely unaffected by all the many activities occurring throughout the universe and remaining indivisible throughout eternity. But He is also the active Mind, the Creator, who is the source and initiator of our own activities and all the activities that make up our evolving universe. He cannot be limited to transcendence, for He is also immanent within our world of time and space, inspiring us, and guiding each of us in His wisdom.

The truth is: all that we do is *His* doing; He is responsible for everything, for we live *in* Him, and are constituted of His being. *He* is not only inspiring our actions, He is performing all the actions in this world through these many bodies and minds; and so, in truth, our karma is *His* karma, though we, as individuals, appear to receive the results of our actions. We are recognized as independent individuals, but, at the same time, we are manifestations or incarnations of *His* being. All is

He, and all that is done is done by Him. Know that He is your true being, your life and all existence, that nothing else exists but God. Know that He is your Creator and ever-present Benefactor, and continually praise Him in your heart of joy.

* * *

13. Imagine (11-27-14)

Imagine there's one religion, and one God who lives within everyone. Imagine that, through contemplative experience, every human being is capable of directly knowing that God who is their divine origin and eternal Self. Imagine that, in this contemplative experience, the world of time and space is transcended along with one's personal identity and is replaced in consciousness by a universal Self that is eternal and all-pervasive. Imagine also that, in the past, some who experienced that eternal Identity, became convinced that they themselves were the Divinity incarnate—and they really were! And then imagine that everyone else is as well—even if they don't know it! Imagine that this experience of an eternal, all-inclusive Self is possible simply because we are all made of the divine Light and our consciousness is actually synonymous with the one eternal Being. Imagine that nothing other than that one Being exists, that we are all contained within It, and are capable of knowing It!

Imagine that this mystical experience of the one divine Self is a common factor in the lives of the founders of all the religious traditions, and that all of the religious traditions in the long history of human experience were simply independent manifestations of that one common mystical experience. Imagine that ancient Judaism, for example, founded on the mystical experience of such ancient figures as Abraham and Moses, represents an anthropomorphic theological view appropriate for the time and place of its origin, given the psychological perception of that culture in the millennia preceding our Current Era. And imagine that Hinduism and Buddhism, which began around the same time as Judaism, but in the very different geographical setting of the subcontinent of Asia, were both also clearly based on contemplative mystical experience.

Imagine Christianity and Islam, each later developments, represented the thought of individual founders who were inspired by their spiritual experience, and whose small following then evolved over time into world-wide religious traditions of their

own. Imagine that, in the process, a few inevitable fictions were added and became integral parts of all these various religious narratives over the course of time, disguising the fact that they are all products of the mystical experience of the one divine Self. Imagine there's one religion, and one God who lives within everyone. Imagine that, through contemplative experience, every human being is capable of directly knowing that God who is their divine origin and eternal Self.

* * *

14. *Nirvanasatkam* (translated 1980)

The philosophy of Nondualism states that, just as every wave arising in the sea is nothing but ocean, and just as every clod of dirt is nothing but earth, so, in the same way, every object and every conscious soul is nothing else but the one all-pervading universal Consciousness. This philosophy is founded on the experiential realization that occurs when that eternal Self becomes revealed in the depths of one's soul. Otherwise, we remain ignorant of our true nature. The reason for our ignorance is that, at birth, that Consciousness becomes associated with the individual physical body that is born, and from that time forward we tend to identify as a separate individual person. We are limited not only by the illusion of separateness, but we are also limited by the karmic conditions under which we are born, as well as by the characteristics we acquire through our current life-experiences.

These limitations obscure, but cannot alter, the fact that the underlying being and true identity of every one of us is that one universal and indivisible Consciousness who is the Creator and Sustainer of this multi-formed phenomenal universe. It is He who lives as every conscious form, and it is He alone who is the identity of all that exists. And yet, no matter how hard we try to know that eternal Self through the reasoning mind, we cannot know it; the direct awareness of that Self eludes us. We can reduce all existence to two: 'I' and 'Thou'; but the further reduction to one, to the nondual Self, is something only *He* can do. When, however, by the grace of God, these two do in fact become one, contrary to our expectations, it is not 'Thou' who remains standing, but 'I' who inevitably stands alone as the sole

Reality. This is why all the sages and seers to whom that eternal Self has revealed itself have declared that “God and I are one; in truth I am He!”

Here is a song by the eighth century Indian sage, Sri Shankaracharya, called *Nirvanasatkam*, in which he tells of the unitive knowledge that came to him through his realization of the Self. Subsequent to that realization, he no longer identifies with any of the modifications of Consciousness with which we ignorantly tend to identify; rather, he declares over and over that He is the absolute Reality, *Chidananda* (Chit and Ananda; eternal Consciousness and Bliss; he is the one divine Self, traditionally referred to as ‘Shiva’:

***Nirvanasatkam* (On The Eternal Reality)**

**Song by Sri Shankaracharya,
translated into English by Swami Abhayananda**

1. I am neither mind, nor the reason, nor ego;
I am not the senses of taste, smell, or vision;
Nor water, nor fire, nor earth, nor the ether;
I am *Chidananda*.¹ I’m Shiva. I’m Shiva.
2. I am not the *prana*, nor its five kinds of movement,
Nor seven gross components, nor five subtle bodies.
I am neither speech nor the organs of action;
I am Chidananda. I’m Shiva. I’m Shiva.
3. I am not the feeling of pride, nor of envy;
Neither pleasure, nor duty, nor wealth belong to me.
I am not attachment, nor greed, nor delusion;
I am Chidananda. I’m Shiva. I’m Shiva.
4. I’m neither evil, nor good; I’m neither pleasure nor pain;
Nor mantra, nor temple, nor *yajna*, nor Veda.
I am neither food, nor the one who consumes it;
I am Chidananda. I’m Shiva. I’m Shiva.
5. I have neither death, nor concern, nor vocation,
Nor mother, nor father; no birth have I taken.

I'm not Guru, not *shishya*, not friend, nor a brother;
I am Chidananda. I'm Shiva. I'm Shiva.

6. I'm beyond every form and beyond all conception;
I am everywhere, but beyond sense-perception.
I am not detachment, nor am I salvation;
I am Chidananda. I'm Shiva. I'm Shiva.

* * *

NOTES:

1. *Chidananda*: Sanskrit word, made up of *Chit* (Consciousness) and *Ananda* (Bliss); synonymous with the eternal Reality.

* * *

15. My Foundation (6-8-2015; rev. 10-25-2017))

There is an ‘I’ at a deep level in this apparent ‘me’ that surfaces in its own time and produces creations that are beyond the power of this apparent ‘me’ to produce. That ‘I’ is divine and eternal and graces ‘me’ with Its presence in moments of its own choosing and has the ability to reveal a reality more true and more clear than this apparent ‘me’ can even imagine. It is this deeper ‘I’ that is referred to by some as the inner soul or *atman*, the Divine, or the Christ within. That ‘I’ cannot be known unless He makes Himself known, but His influence may be recognized by His fruits.

Therefore, let it be known and understood by all who read the words I have posted here that whatever truth or clarity may be found herein is not of my own making, but is given by that divine Self as a favor to this supplicant soul for its eagerness to serve. No praise is due this eager soul, this apparent ‘me’, but all praise is due to that divine and eternal ‘I’ who has treated me so generously in allowing ‘me’ to be included among Its humble servants.

That one Self, eternal and undivided, does not truly consist of two beings: a Master and servant, an ‘I’ and a ‘me’; rather It is an indivisible Spirit—appearing as an individualized form in this manifest world as ‘me’, but operating *within* ‘me’—as eternal Soul, a universal ‘I’. At times I address that Spirit as “Thou”, but He is my ground, my foundation, not separate, but surrounding and encompassing ‘me’. We are one, though, while the body persists, along with this *ego*, it seems that we are two.

* * *

16. The I Between Us (2-14-14)

When I first discovered that God was within me, and that everything in the world around me was also God, it still seemed to me that, between the God within and the God without, there was still an ‘I’, a ‘me’, that stood in the way of my vision of unity. I felt as though I was a pitcher of water in an ocean of water: there was water within and water without, but *I*, the pitcher, was there as a separate thing preventing my awareness of God. And I prayed that God would take away this *I* that veiled His omnipresence and let me know oneness in Him.

And suddenly I was graced by God with the revelation that even this body, and even this *I*, is God’s own. It had been my owning of this *I* that prevented my realization that there is nothing anywhere but God. He creates the forms of this world, and He constitutes our awareness of this world. It is we who make the mistake of thinking that this body and this awareness of *I* belongs exclusively to ourselves, thus wrongly separating our perception of *I* from God.

This obscured perception is a blindness within us that tends us toward self-preference; we call it the *ego*, or ‘I’. It is a blindness that is built in for self-protection, for self-preservation. But it blinds us to the vision of God’s all-encompassing presence, and it can only be healed with the help of God’s grace. He reveals through divine vision that the One constitutes both *I* and God, both past and future, both life and death; and that all things move together of one accord, coordinated in God. It is this vision that rids us of the blindness under which we suffered for so long.

But beware! For this blindness—this ego—will continue to rise up in its attempt to corrupt your sight once again. At every corner, it awaits the opportunity to subtly reassert itself and leave you once again in darkness and confusion. Your only weapons against this enemy are silence and humility, and a constant diligence to remember the One in whom and by whom you are fashioned. Sing His name in your heart to remind you and rely on His help in your need. He will illumine your blindness, and restore you to sight, and eventually He will uplift you to wholeness in the sweetness of His eternal Light. There, no ego will threaten; there, you’ll need not struggle to remember. His peace and yours will be the same, all duality put behind.

* * *

18. My Two I's (8-6-2015)

My present name is Swami Abhayananda, though I was given the name Stanley Ross Trout at birth. Both of these names refer to who I am as an individualized person temporarily existing in the grand illusion of time and space. But there is another 'I' that I claim as my *permanent* identity. That other *I* (what Vedantins call the *Atman* or Self) is the universal Consciousness that is the eternal foundation and support of all I's. If I refer to my temporal phenomenal self, 'I' means one thing; if I refer to my eternal Self, 'I' means something else. So, as long as *I* exist in both the eternal and the temporal realm, it appears that there are two I's. But that is only an appearance.¹

It is only those who have become consciously aware of the eternal *I* who are able to recognize this apparent double-identity, and to distinguish between the two I's. Jesus, for example, on whom the religious organization of Christianity was founded, spoke frequently from the individualized temporal identity, identifying with the personal being who was born as a Jew, and lived in the community of Nazareth; but he had known his eternal 'I', and he occasionally spoke from that universal Consciousness identity as well, such as when he said, "I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest. Everything came forth from me, and everything returns to me. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift a stone, and you will find me there."²

Many of those who do not recognize the existence of two I's in themselves are confused by the words uttered by Jesus. 'Well, which is he?' they ask, 'man or God?' And, of course, the answer is 'He is both!' They are the two aspects of his dual identity. The same is true of you—except that you are as yet unaware of your greater identity. When you do become aware of that greater Self, you will declare, as Jesus did, "Before Abraham was, *I* am."³

The dual identity of Jesus as man and God was much discussed by the early Church Fathers, but they did not understand that Jesus was disclosing, not just his own personal reality, but the divine nature of all men. Though he was treated as a common preacher, Jesus was a mystic, privy to the mysteries of the divine reality, and he was revealing a metaphysical truth universally applicable to everyone.

The fact is, there are never really *two* I's; every soul is a manifestation of the one universal Consciousness and has no other permanent identity. That One is the only true 'I'. But, from the time we are born into this world, we begin fashioning a false separate personal self that exists only in our minds. At birth, each of us is given a name to distinguish each of us as a unique being, with a distinct parentage. We each bear distinctive characteristics, and, in the course of time, distinctive histories, which in turn contribute to our distinctive personalities. In this way, a soul is developed over many lifetimes, giving us a strong sense of individuality and uniqueness. But the fact is that we are all manifestations of the one Self, the one Consciousness, from whom and in whom all beings exist, and to whom we all owe our being.

That one Being is everyone's true Self, but in order to become aware of that universal Self, it is necessary to give some time to meditation in which you can quiet the mental urging and clamoring of your fabricated personal identity. It will help if you can focus your mind instead on a phrase or mantra that brings silence and peace to your conscious awareness. Let the breath too be calmed, and devoutly invoke the Lord of all being. When you become aware of His presence, approach Him reverently. If He is favorable to you, He will merge your awareness into His own; all remnants of your limited personal being will fade away, and you will know yourself as the one illimitable Self of all.

* * *

NOTES:

1. See my article, "The Appearance of Duality (2008)" at my website: www.themysticsvision.com.
2. *Thomas, Gospel of*, 114; (trans. by Thomas O. Lambdin), from Robinson, James M., ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, E.J. Brill and Harper & Row, 1977, p. 135.
3. *John, Gospel of*, 8:58; from the New Testament of the King James Bible.

* * *

18. The Appearance of Duality (2008)

It is well known that the Self of man and the ultimate and transcendent Reality known as God are not two. This is the perennially acceptable view of “Nonduality”. But it must also be acknowledged that there is an *apparent* duality which has a certain phenomenal reality to it as well. For, during the “mystical experience” one experiences a noumenal and eternal ‘I’ who manifests this universe in which lives a phenomenal and temporal ‘I’. The ‘I’ is the same, yet different. The difference between the two ‘I’s is that the eternal one projected Himself as the temporal one into this world of time and space; the temporal one did not project himself into eternity.

So, God, by His very *projection* of this temporal universe, establishes an *apparent* duality for those living within this projection. This is not difficult to understand: If there is a dreamer and his dream, there *appears* to be two. But are there really two? The truth is that there is still only one; the other is only an imagination, and though the consciousness in the dream seems to be an ‘other’, it is in fact the consciousness of the dreamer. But some would argue: still, the other *exists* as a phenomenon, and therefore constitutes a second. It is a question of perspective, is it not? At least we may be certain that, once the dreamer awakes and the dream is no more, then only one remains. The Nondualist would no doubt remark that there was *always* only one.

We dream-images enclosed within this illusory universe of time and space, are similarly “phenomena”, and therefore *appear* to exist. And so, as *images* of God (who is our *true* Self), we regard God as separate, ‘other’. For, while *we* are enclosed within the world of time and space which is His projection made of His Consciousness, *He* is nonetheless entirely beyond it. He is the eternal Mind that projects this space/time continuum, this form-filled world, as a construct of thought. He is indeed the Consciousness which animates us and which lends us consciousness. He is our very Self; He is the one and *only* Reality. But it is not wrong to acknowledge the *apparent* duality which He brings to pass in the act of projecting this world of beings within Himself.

Ultimately, when we pass from space-time to the unlimited Reality, we shall recognize the eternally inseparable oneness of God and our Self; nonetheless, while living as separate beings within this worldly illusion, it is quite understandable if we call out to Him as though He were separate, or ‘other’, just as

dream figures might call out within themselves in an effort to contact the dreamer, who is indeed their own essence, a one who becomes an *apparent* two.

Some hold exclusively to the eternal truth of unity, declaring their single and only identity to be ‘the One’; these are the *jnani*s (or “knowers”). Others, acknowledging the *apparent* duality between themselves and God, worship the One as other than themselves, as the Exemplar of which they are mere images. These are the *bhaktas* (or “lovers”). And both are perfectly correct and valid pathways to the realization of God, the knowledge of the eternal Self. The *jnani* says, “I am That”; the *bhakta* says, “O Lord, Thou alone art!”. And both arrive at the selfsame realization of the Real.

‘And what of the apparent duality of body and spirit?’ we may wonder. We all know what Descartes thought about it. But I would ask, ‘Have you ever seen ice cubes floating in water? Are they two things or one?’ There seems to be two different substances, since each is clearly separate from the other; but no, it is one substance in two different states. When I was immersed in the unitive vision, I wondered “Where is the temple (of the body)? Which the imperishable, which the abode?” For there was to be seen no separate body-temple with an imperishable soul within! There was no division to be found at all. All is Consciousness-Energy in this dream! And all of it is imperishable. It is only the various shapes that are so changeable, so very perishable; but the Essence is one.

Think of your own dream-creations! Is your dream-character divided into a consciousness and a body-form? No. It is one thing: the form and its limited self-consciousness are one projected creative mind-stuff. Likewise, for us here on earth. We live and move and have our being within the Mind-stuff of God. It is His drama, and He is the Self-consciousness of each of us. When we ultimately awake, we shall know the Source of all selves, the Source of all forms; we shall know that we were, are, and ever shall be, the One who lives in eternal bliss.

But what of the separation between the ‘soul’ and the body at death? It seems quite certain that consciousness withdraws from the body when the heart stops beating, that consciousness and the solidified energy that is our body then go their separate ways. And that seems to imply a real, absolute, duality. But it is just the magic of the One. Think of what happens when you wake from a dream: Your own consciousness of Self remains even when the dream vanishes. Who you thought you were in the dream is seen to have been an illusory identity; but *You* remain. The dream scenery is vanished too. Where did it go? It never really was. It too

was only your own consciousness, *appearing* as form. Likewise, in this universe, matter is consciousness appearing as energy, appearing as form.

The universe itself is occurring *as a whole* within the one Consciousness. It is an integral dream-like phenomenon. He is always One, even while projecting the universal dream with His Consciousness-Energy. When each of the dream-like images awakes, they awake to the One. Then, at the end of the universal ‘dream’, all forms revert to Energy, which ceases its transformations and merges into the one Consciousness. Consciousness ceases its play, resolving quietly into Itself. They were never two; they are merely twin aspects of His projective Power. The Supreme Consciousness will rest now, prior to projecting once again an apparent universe of conscious forms, another seeming duality upon His oneness.

Keeping in mind this unity-in-duality, or duality-in-unity, please reconsider the remarkable text from the Gnostic seer, Simon Magus (*fl. ca. 40 C.E.*), entitled *The Great Exposition*, which so ably explains the apparent duality within the Nondual reality:

The Great Exposition **by Simon Magus**

There are *two* aspects of the One: The first of these is the Higher, the Divine Mind of the universe, which governs all things, and is masculine. The other is the lower, the Thought (*epinoia*) which produces all things, and is feminine. As a pair united, they comprise all that exists.

The Divine Mind is the Father who sustains all things and nourishes all that begins and ends. He is the One who eternally stands, without beginning or end. He exists entirely alone; for, while the Thought arising from Unity, and coming forth from the Divine Mind, creates [the appearance of] duality, the Father remains a Unity. The Thought is in Himself, and so He is alone. Made manifest to Himself from Himself, He appears to be two. He becomes “Father” by virtue of being called so by His own Thought.

Since He, Himself, brought forward Himself, by means of Himself, manifesting to Himself His own Thought, it is not correct to attribute

creation to the Thought alone. For She (the Thought) conceals the Father within Herself; the Divine Mind and the Thought are intertwined. Thus, though [they appear] to be a pair, one opposite the other, the Divine Mind is in no way different from the Thought, inasmuch as they are one.

Though there appears to be a Higher, the Mind, and a lower, the Thought, truly, It is a Unity, just as what is manifested from these two [i.e., the universe] is a unity, while appearing to be a duality. The Divine Mind and the Thought are discernible, one from the other, but they are one, though they appear to be two.

[Thus,] ... there is one Divine Reality, [apparently] divided as Higher and lower; generating Itself, nourishing Itself, seeking Itself, finding Itself, being mother of Itself, father of Itself, sister of Itself, spouse of Itself, daughter of Itself, son of Itself. It is both Mother and Father, a Unity, being the Root of the entire circle of existence.¹

NOTES:

1. Simon Magus, *Apophysis Megale* ("The Great Exposition"), quoted by Hippolytus of Rome, in *Refutatio Omnium Heresium* ("The Refutation of All Heresies"), VI. 8; adapted from Roberts, Rev. A. & Donaldson, J. (eds), *The Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Vol. VI; Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1892; pp. 208-210.

As this text is one of my favorites, it has been cited by me previously in Abhayananda, Swami, *History of Mysticism*, Olympia, Wash., Atma Books, 1987, 2000; p. 132; and again, with commentary, in Abhayananda, Swami, *Mysticism And Science*, Winchester, U.K., O Books, 2007; pp. 66-72.

* * *

19. Perfect Nondualism—Part One (1991, rev. 9-16-14)

The people of India call their indigenous religion, ‘the eternal religion’ (*Sanatana Dharma*). It existed even before the Aryan incursion, before the Vedas. From the Vedas came the philosophy of *Vedanta*, ‘the end of the Vedas’, embodied in the *Upanishads*. The philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, or Nondual Vedanta, was beautifully expressed in the Upanishads, written by some nameless sages perhaps a thousand years before the Current Era. Buddhist seers of later centuries wrote their own scriptural texts explaining an identical vision. Then, the great medieval revitalizer of Nondual philosophy, Shankaracharya (6th – 8th centuries C.E.), following in the Upanishadic tradition, set forth in very explicit terms the nature of the One without a second.

Using the ancient terminology, Shankara spoke of the ultimate reality as *Brahman*. Brahman is ‘the One’ of Platonism, ‘the Godhead’ of Christian theology. *Ishvara* is Platonism’s *Nous* (the Divine Mind), and Christian theology’s ‘God’. Brahman and *Ishvara* are not the same; they differ in exactly the same ways that ‘the One’ and ‘Nous’ differ in Platonism, and as ‘the Godhead’ and ‘God’ differ in Christian theology. In the Advaita Vedanta of the Upanishads as well as in the philosophy of Shankara, *Ishvara* is regarded as the Lord and ruler of Maya and its world-appearance, including all souls. Brahman is the conscious Ground and Source, while *Ishvara* serves an executive and creative function. *Ishvara* can be prayed to, worshipped, envisualized, and realized; Brahman, however, is formless and absolute, far beyond human relationship, though It is the transcendent Source and Foundation of all.

Shankara asserted that the phenomenal world produced by *Ishvara*’s *maya* was *mithya*, “illusory” or “unreal”. The phenomenal universe, said Shankaracharya, is an *adhyasa*, a “superimposition”, upon Brahman. This statement is not extraordinary in itself, but what is extraordinary about Shankara’s philosophy is that he stated that the superimposition of the world upon Brahman was an act of *Ishvara*’s Maya produced through the individual minds of those perceiving the world. For Shankara, “Brahman remains eternally infinite and unchanged. It is not transformed into this universe. It simply *appears* as this universe to us, in our ignorance. We superimpose the apparent world upon Brahman, just as we sometimes superimpose a snake upon a coil of rope.” ¹ According to Shankara, “There is no reality independent of our knowing minds.” “The apparent world,” he said, “is caused by our imagination, our ignorance. It is not real. It is like seeing the snake in the rope. It is like a passing dream.” ² In other words, according to

Shankara, there is no objective world; there is only the world that exists in our minds and that we individually invent.

Shankara, following in the tradition of his *paramguru* (his guru's guru), Gaudapada, taught that only Brahman exists, and that the universally perceived phenomena of 'the world' appear, not because they are 'created' by God, but rather because we humans, while actually perceiving only *Brahman*, project, or "superimpose" names and forms upon that invisible substratum by the power of *maya*. He interpreted God's power of *Maya* (illusion) to be, not God's power to 'create' an illusory objective universe, but a power placed by God within the human soul to project, or imagine, a phenomenal world where there is truly only Brahman, much as one might imagine a snake where there is actually a rope, or a body of water where there is only a dry desert.

Thus, while in the traditional philosophy of Vedanta, supported by the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Bhagavad Gita*, the world is represented as an illusory, but objective, phenomenon produced by God, Shankara's 'doctrine of superimposition' asserts that the perceived universe is merely an imaginary projection by the individual mind or soul of a world of objects superimposed upon the substrate of *Brahman*—in other words, that it is a subjective illusion that takes place solely in the human mind, or individual *jiva*.

It is clear, however, that Shankara could not have anticipated the eventual development of evolutionary theory, which put a serious crimp in his theory of superimposition. In Shankara's time no one even imagined that humanity had *evolved* over time from more primitive species. Insofar as Shankara and his contemporaries knew, humans had existed forever; and had always been around to imagine a world. Like the author of *Genesis*, he was ignorant of the fact that prior to around two and a half million years ago there were no humans. And if the world could only be 'imagined' by a human being, then not even an imaginary world existed prior to the time empirically determined to be the time when the lower animal species evolved to the human species. If the present evidence for the evolutionary history of the universe—from its beginning to the development of *homo sapiens*, including astronomical observations, geological strata, fossils, etc.—indicates an actual historical reality, then it tells of a world that never existed, since there was no one around at that time to imagine it.

If Shankara's theory were correct, it would mean that we, as well as the first humans, imagined a world whose past stretched far beyond its original imagining.

We imagined the geological strata that told of a more ancient past, and we imagined a universe where the light from galaxies distant in time told, not of an objective reality, but of a merely imagined past. The history of our universe, according to Shankara, never occurred—except in the minds of the first humans; i.e., all the empirical evidence for the antiquity of the world was simply deceptive and illusory.

In recent years, a similar misconception arose when a group of Jews and Christians banding together under the label “Young Earth Creationism”, professed to believe in a literal interpretation of the Biblical book of *Genesis*, asserting that the universe, earth, and all life was actually created by God between 5700 and 10,000 years ago in six 24-hour days, despite the empirically based evidence that the universe began some 13.7 billion years ago, the earth about 4.5 billion years ago, and intelligent life on earth around 2.5 million years ago. They interpreted the account given in the Bible as literal, believing that it was infallibly and necessarily true. In fact, prior to around 1800 A.D., when the empirical method of science first began to be regarded respectfully, nearly everyone interpreted the Bible literally, like these “Young Earth Creationists”. And a 2011 Gallup survey reports that 30% of U.S. adults still do.

When these ‘Young Earth Creationists’ were confronted with the cosmological and geological evidence for a much more ancient past, they countered that the universe and the earth were created around 6000 years ago with all the false indications of an older cosmological and geological past built into it, even though that past never actually occurred! In other words, the evidence for a more ancient universe and planet earth was divinely fabricated. However, this implied a devious and deceitful Creator God, which ultimately could not be considered as acceptable.

And so, as it turns out, it is not so easy to explain away empirical evidence. We are forced to choose between a speculative metaphysical theory and the evidence of our reason and senses. Is there really a world out there or does it exist only in our consciousness of it? Another way of thinking about this question is to ask: ‘Did the one Divine Mind create this illusory universe around 14 billion years ago, or is it created independently by each of us daily in our own conscious minds?’ This is a question which each of us must answer for ourselves. What do you think?

A second objection to Shankara’s theory arose as well. His terminology was regarded as unfortunate by many, as it seemed to imply a *real* duality between God

and the world. If there is something superimposed, some reasoned, it must be something *other* than Brahman.

Shankara, in his many writings, frequently differentiated between Brahman, the eternal Self, and Maya's product, the world, simply in order to guide the earnest seeker away from attention to the transient appearance (the phenomenal world), and toward the eternal Reality (the Self). He never intended to imply, however, that the transient appearance was anything but Brahman. Here, let him explain in his own words:

Brahman is the Reality, the one Existence. Because of the ignorance of our human minds, the universe seems to be composed of diverse forms; but it is Brahman alone. ...Apart from Brahman, the universe does not exist. There is nothing beside Him. It has no separate existence, apart from its Ground.

And again:

The universe is truly Brahman, for that which is superimposed has no separate existence from its substratum. Whatever a deluded person perceives through mistake is Brahman and Brahman alone. The silver imagined in mother-of-pearl is really mother-of-pearl. The name, "universe", is superimposed on Brahman; what we call "the universe" is [really] nothing but Brahman.³

While Shankara never intended to imply by the use of his word, "superimposition", that there was something other than Brahman superimposed on Brahman, that unfortunately, is what arises in the minds of some when they hear this word, "superimposition". Some objected vigorously to his terminology. For example, a 13th century Maharashtran saint, by the name of Jnaneshvar, objected to the notion of superimposition as an implication of duality, and attempted to clarify the doctrine of Nonduality in the following passage from his book, *Amritanubhav*, "The Nectar of Mystical Experience":

When it is always only the one pure Consciousness seeing itself, why postulate the necessity of a superimposition? Does one superimpose the sparkle on a jewel? Does gold need to superimpose shininess on itself?⁴ A lamp that is lit does not need the superimposition of light; it is resplendent with light. Likewise, the one pure Consciousness is

resplendent with radiance. Therefore, without obligation to anything else, He easily perceives Himself. ⁵

... Whatever form appears, appears because of Him. There is nothing here but the Self. It is the gold itself which shines in the form of a necklace or a coin; they, themselves, are nothing but gold. In the current of the river or the waves of the sea, there is nothing but water. Similarly, in the universe, nothing exists or is brought into existence that is other than the Self. Whether appearing as the seen, or perceiving as the seer, nothing else exists besides the Self. ⁶

Perhaps it is impossible to adequately express in words the differentiation between the eternal Consciousness and its creative Energy without making it appear that they are two separate things. This would seem to be the case, since every time one mystic gives expression to his vision, another mystic takes exception to the way it is described, and tries his own hand at it, only to have another mystic come along somewhere down the line who takes issue with *his* terminology. In any case, Shankara's writings gave rise to many misunderstandings, and to clear up some of these misunderstandings of terminology, some mystics living in the northern state of Kashmir, in the 9th century C.E., including a seer named Vasugupta (ca. 950 C.E.), devised their own interpretation of the philosophy of Nondualism, which they called *Kashmir Shaivism*.

Legend tells that Vasugupta had a dream in which Lord Shiva told him the whereabouts of a large rock on which Shiva himself had inscribed some teachings in the form of brief aphorisms regarding the nature of God, the soul, and the universe. The inscriptions were copied from the rock by Vasugupta and later became known as the *Shiva Sutras*. Thus, like many other religious traditions, Kashmir Shaivism claims Divine revelation as its source. Such revealed scriptures are called *agamas* by those who embrace this tradition. Other *agamas*, besides the *Shiva Sutras*, are the *Malini-vijaya*, the *Vijnana-bhairava*, and the *Rudra-yamala*. There are also some subsidiary scriptures which explain the *agamas*; these are called *spandas*, or *spanda-karikas*, which formulate doctrine. Then there are the philosophical works which attempt to present the teachings in a logical and ordered form; these are the *Pratyabijna shastras*. Some of these are *Shiva-drshhti* by Somananda (ca. 875-925 C.E.), *Ishvara-pratyabijna* and *Shivastotravali* by Utpaladeva (ca. 900-950 C.E.), and *Pratyabijna-hridayam* by Kshemaraj (10th -11th centuries). The philosophy expressed in these scriptures of Kashmir Shaivism also

came to be known as *Pratyabijna Darshana*, “The Philosophy of Recognition”; and also as *Purna Advaita*, or “Perfect Nondualism”.

The ultimate Reality, according to Kashmir Shaivism, is *Paramashiva*, “the Supreme Shiva”. This is, of course, synonymous with *Parabrahman*, “The Supreme Brahman” of Vedanta. Indeed, in all cases, there is no difference whatever between the vision of Vedanta and that of Kashmir Shaivism, except for the differences in terminology. For example, the Advaita Vedanta of Shankara holds that it is Brahman’s Power of Illusion (*Maya*) that produces the world-appearance; and Kashmir Shaivism says that Paramashiva “appears” as the world through His Creative Power (*Shakti*). Shankara says the universe is a “superimposition” upon Brahman; Kashmir Shaivism says the universe is simply Paramashiva appearing as form. There is not the slightest difference between them except for their distinct individual terminologies. It is commonly found in this world that isolated groups of people with a common religious tradition tend to regard their own way of saying things to be more correct than the way some other people of another tradition may say it. The reality is that language, by its very nature, is imprecise; and it is only the sage who knows the Truth by experiencing It directly who may really be said to know the Truth.

The sages of Kashmir Shaivism say that Paramashiva is the one Reality; all is taking place within Him. But He remains unchanged and unmoved by all this multiplicity and apparent change. He is the transcendent Totality, and so He remains the same, no matter what. To Him, there is only the pure sky of Consciousness and Bliss. He remains awake to His oneness always, while the “creation” comes and goes. It is breathed out by Him and breathed in again, in an ever-recurring cycle. It is manifested, and then re-absorbed back into Him. This emanation is called *abhasa*, a “shining forth”. Then, when it is withdrawn again, that is called *pralaya*. The complete cycle is a *kalpa*—which amounts to 4 billion, 320 million years of Earth-time.

According to the sages of Kashmir Shaivism, a *kalpa* begins with a *spanda* (what in more recent times is regarded as the impetus to “the Big Bang”). *Spanda* is the first movement of will, the initial flutter or throb of movement in the Divine Will, or *Shakti*. As for the question, “Why does He create at all?” the answer given by the Kashmir Shaivites is the same as that given by the Vedantists: “It is simply His nature to do so.” It is His innate nature to breathe forth the universe of multiplicity; and yet, at the same time, it is asserted that He manifests the universe of His own free will, as a play, or sport. In fact, the very first Sutra of the

Pratyabijna-hridayam says that “It is the divine Consciousness alone, luminous, absolute, and free-willed, that flashes forth in the form of the numerous worlds.”

The Pratyabijna philosophers say that, from *spanda*, then comes the bifurcation into *aham* and *idam*, subject and object. These two aspects of the One are also spoken of as *prakasha* and *vimarsha*. *Prakasha* is the conscious light, the witness-Consciousness, the “subject” aspect of Paramashiva. *Vimarsha* is Its power of self-manifestation; i.e., the “object” aspect of Paramashiva. Thus, inherent in the process of manifestation is this Self-division of Paramashiva into conscious subject and phenomenal object; from this initial polarity, all other dualities, including manifold souls, come into being. And, according to the Kashmir Shaivite philosophy, while there is never anything but Paramashiva, the souls thus created by this Self-division experience a limitation of their originally unlimited powers. As stated in the *Pratyabijna-hridayam* of Kshemaraj, “Consciousness Itself, descending from Its universal state, becomes the limited consciousness of man, through the process of contraction. Then, because of this contraction, the universal Consciousness becomes an ordinary human being, subject to limitations.”

The truth, of course, is that the Lord, the one Supreme Consciousness, is never subject to limitations. He lives in absolute freedom. He is all-pervading and all-knowing. By His Power, He can do whatever He likes. And so, in order to become many and play within the (imaginary) multiplicity which is the universe, He sheds His undifferentiated state of Unity and accepts differences. Then, His various powers of will, knowledge and action appear to have shrunk, though this is not really so. This limited state is the state of ordinary people, subject to limitations, such as you and me.

When *Shakti* manifests as individual conscious entities, the one Consciousness *appears* to be bound by Its own Self-imposed limitations; Its primal powers of omniscience, perfection, everlastingness and all-pervasiveness are then experienced in a reduced condition. Although omniscient, He knows only a few things; though omnipotent, He feels helpless and acts effectively only in a small sphere. The master of perfect Bliss, He is ensnared in pleasure and pain, attachment and aversion. The eternal Being cries aloud from fear of death, regarding Himself as mortal. Pervading all space and form, He grieves because He is tied to a particular place and a particular form. This is the condition of all creatures whose *Shakti* is reduced, and who are caught in the transmigratory cycle. Again, quoting from the *Pratyabijna-hridayam*: “To be a transmigratory being, one needs only to be deluded by one’s own Shakti.”

It is because Shiva, the Self, has become involved in His own Shakti—that is, manifested in form—that He finds Himself in the state of “an ordinary being, subject to limitations.” But, we must see, it is His sport to do so. Without such an “involution”, there could be no evolution. The evolution, or unwinding, of a watch spring could not occur unless there is first an involution of the watch spring created by the winding of the watch. A log burns, i.e., evolves into energy, only because energy, in the form of sunlight, water, and soil, has become involuted as the log of wood. Evolution is the reverse transmutation of an effect into its cause. Paramashiva, or Brahman, or Chit-Shakti, has “involved” Himself in the form of gross matter, and through the human form, must “evolve” back to Himself.

It is only in the human form that one is able to choose to take the evolutionary path back to the Source, because of the development of mind. It is the mind that is capable of development toward intelligence, concentration, meditation, and, finally absorption in pure Consciousness. This is evolution. It is also known as “Liberation”, as it is the freeing of oneself from identification with the body and the activity of the mind, and thus from rebirth. Liberation, or *moksha*, is freedom from the vicious cycle of births and deaths which from the beginning of creation are whirling a soul around. In fact, life is not worthy of the name, “life”, as it is really no more than a series of limitations, the very nature of which pinches the soul and makes it hanker after something real, something permanent, beyond the pale of sensual pleasures and pains, something not clouded with the gloomy, lusty, desires, which are never quenched and are never satiable. Real “life” is that for which the soul yearns with an incessant longing, though not knowing where and how it is to be obtained. Still, it feels with an inborn conviction the existence of a greater life, a greater Self, as a tangible reality. Everyone yearns for it, because life, eternal life, is the soul’s very nature.

The astute student will recognize the aforementioned doctrines of Kashmir Shaivism as quite consistent with the precepts of Vedanta. The ultimate goal of the “bound” soul is the knowledge of the Self, which constitutes “liberation” from the wheel of transmigration. This is the teaching of both Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism (and Buddhism as well), revealing once again their undeviatingly common perspective. But, it is only natural that all philosophies stemming from real “mystical” experience will find agreement in nearly all their conceptual elements. Listen, for example, to what is said in the *Ishvara Pratyabijnavimarshini* of Abhinavagupta (ca. 950-1000 C.E.):

The knowledge of the identity of the soul (*jiva*) and God (*Shiva*), which has been proclaimed in the scriptures, constitutes liberation; lack of this knowledge constitutes bondage.⁷

In other words, it is ignorance of our true nature that binds us, and nothing else. In fact, it is clear that we have never been actually bound. This is brought out in the *Tripura rahasya*, attributed to Dattatreya, which states:

Though, in reality, there is no bondage, the individual is in bondage as long as there exists the feeling of limitation in him. ... In fact, there has never been any veiling or covering anywhere in Reality. No one has ever been in bondage. Please show me where such a bondage could be. Besides these two false beliefs—that there is such a thing as bondage, and that there is such a thing as mind—there is no bondage for anyone anywhere.⁸

Both Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism recognize the possibility of *jivanmukta*, liberation from the wheel of transmigration while still living in the body. However, it is not merely the mystical experience of Unity which constitutes this self-liberation; one must also assimilate the knowledge thus acquired into one's everyday consciousness and make the knowledge of the Self an ever-present awareness. Here is the statement of this ultimate liberation from the *Pratyabijnahridayam*:

Final realization is possible only when the complete nature of the Self is realized. Though there might be release after death, there can be no release in life unless the universal Self is grasped through the intellect. Indeed, the equanimity in the experience of worldly enjoyment and in the experience of Unity is what truly constitutes the liberation of the soul, while living. ... The individual who identifies with the Self and regards the universe to be a sport and is always united with it, is undoubtedly liberated in this life.⁹

And this is reiterated in the *Spanda-karika*:

This entire universe is a sport of universal Consciousness. He who is constantly aware of this truth is liberated in this life, without doubt.¹⁰

NOTES:

1. from the Introduction to Shankara's *Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*, trans. by Swami Prabhavananda & Christopher Isherwood, Hollywood, Calif., Vedanta Press, 1947, 1975; p. 12.
2. Shankara, *Vivekachudamani*, III:16; Swami Prabhavananda and C. Isherwood, *Shankara's Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*, Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1947; pp. 70-71.
3. Shankara, *Vivekachudamani*, trans. by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood; Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1947; p. 73. In order to illustrate the process of 'superimposition', Shankara utilizes several examples: A person might see a piece of rope lying on the ground and think that it is a snake. In such a case, that person is said to 'superimpose' a snake on the rope. Or, one might be walking by a field at night, and imagine that a wooden post is a man standing in the field; in such a case, one is said to have 'superimposed' a man on the post. Another example Shankara offers is that of a person seeing a piece of an oyster shell—what is known as 'mother of pearl'; but he imagines that it is a piece of silver. He is said to have 'superimposed' the silver on the mother of pearl. All of these examples are intended to be analogous to the superimposition by the *jiva* of a world of objects upon what is really Brahman. And, while it's easy to see how one could mistake one form for another, such as mistaking a post for a man, or a rope for a snake, or a piece of shell for silver; Brahman is formless. How, then, could one mistake Brahman for a universe of forms? The analogies do not stand up to scrutiny. Shankara *does* distinguish between a personal illusion (*pratibhasika*) and a universal, or collective, illusion (*vyavaharika*); but, according to Shankara, in both cases, it is the individual *jiva* who is responsible for the creation and maintenance of his own illusory perception.
4. Jnaneshvar, *Amritanubhav*, 7:165, 166; Swami Abhayananda, *Jnaneshvar: The Life And Works, etc.*, Olympia, Wash., Atma Books, 1989; p. 186.
5. *Ibid.*, 7:170, 171; p. 187.
6. *Ibid.*, 7:235-237, 240; pp. 193-194.

7. *Ishvara Pratyabijna-vimarshini*
8. *Tripurarahasya*
9. Kshemaraj, *Pratyabijnahridayam*
10. *Spandakarika*, 3:3

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20. Perfect Nondualism—Part Two (1991, rev. 9-16-14)

Long before the emergence of Kashmir Shaivism, the religion of devotion to the one ultimate Reality as *Shiva* was widespread in India. Scholars recognize images of Shiva from antiquity going as far back as the Harappan civilization and the civilization of Mohenjo-daro (ca. 2500 BCE). Then, after the Aryan incursion around 2000 BCE, the priest-authors of the Vedas popularized the names of *Brahman* and *Vishnu* as the deity. Later, Kapila (ca. 9th century BCE) introduced the philosophy of Sankhya, which referred to the universal conscious Spirit as *Purusha*. Then, about five centuries later, we find the Svetasvatara Upanishad (400-200 BCE) first extolling the Divine as the Vedic *Brahman*, then as the indigenous *Shiva*, and then as the *Purusha* of Sankhya philosophy, all in the same work—thereby helping to spread the understanding that God is one, though referred to by many names. In fact, much of the theology succinctly expressed in this early devotional Upanishad can later be found in the teachings of Kashmir Shaivism—especially the repeated declaration that there is *nothing else* here but God. This should not be surprising, however, since all those who are graced with the vision of the divine Self, naturally speak of it in very much the same way.

In studying the scriptures of Kashmir Shaivism, we can't help recognizing that, while the Kashmiri sages who lived in the 9th or 10th centuries did not possess our modern understanding of the natural world, their spiritual vision nonetheless possessed a universal validity. At the same time, the writings of these few mystics living in this common time and place—Vasugupta, Somananda, Utpaladeva, Abhinavagupta, and Kshemaraj—are distinctly personal expressions of their own unique experience and proclivities and must not be regarded as a single monolithic entity called 'Kashmir Shaivism'.

The philosophies of Advaita Vedanta and of Kashmir Shaivism both appeal strongly to our spiritual instincts, but we must ask 'which of these two philosophies—Shankara's version of Advaita Vedanta or Kashmir Shaivism—is seen to be validated in the actual experience of the inner revelation of the Self? When the truth is revealed, is the universe and all that's in it seen to be a mere mental illusion, or is all seen to be the very manifestation of God?' I can only speak for my own 'mystical' experience, in which the very first words from my mouth were "O my God, even this body is Thine own!" In that experience, my consciousness was the Consciousness of God, and 'I' was seen to be in the clouds and in the earth; 'I' was realized to be the life-pulse of all creatures, the resounding

bells of inner joy and the fiery intensity of song that bursts from the human heart. Everything—even this being I call ‘I’—is made of God. All was seen to be an endless continuum of divine Being; and I experienced that infinite Consciousness as my own. The universe is arguably an illusion, a sequence of appearances, formed at the subatomic level by electromagnetic impulses; but the underlying cause and substance of these electromagnetic impulses is the divine Consciousness that is God.

I saw, in my spiritual vision, that it is the small egoic sense, the personal ‘I’, that creates the interior illusion of duality, that invents the mental opposites of love and hatred, peace and unrest, happiness and sorrow, while in truth there is only the one undivided reality. I saw that the Creator breathes forth the vast universe and then withdraws it again in a repetitive cycle of becoming and ending, and that all things move together of one will in an intricately coordinated universe. In retrospect, my own experience ¹ seems to fit more comfortably into the view expounded by the Kashmir Shaivite philosophers than into Shankara’s version. And my experience of the eternal Self occurred decades before I even heard of Kashmir Shaivism. All in all, the precepts of the Kashmir Shaivite philosophers seem to me more representative of the actual experience of the Self than Shankara’s.

I also find the Kashmir Shaivite description of the role of Grace in one’s spiritual *sadhana* to fit more accurately with my own experience. *Sadhana* is the period of one’s spiritual journey in search of the Self. And, in many ways, the *sadhana* of Kashmir Shaivism is similar to the *sadhana* of Vedanta: it consists of self-effort and Grace. Self-effort is in the form of learning about the Self, contemplating the knowledge gained, and meditating on the Self. It is a self-effort toward Consciousness; but Self-realization comes of Grace. There is nothing to be done to receive it, but to be true to the Self, to give our purified hearts to the communion with God within. In this way, we prepare ourselves for Grace.

Every great spiritual teacher, including Jesus, taught that one realizes God through His Grace alone. This may be verified in the Christian scriptures; for example, when Jesus was asked by some of his disciples, “Who, then, can enter the kingdom of God? (in other words, “Who can realize the Self?),” Jesus replied, “For man it is impossible; but for God all things are possible.” ² He was saying, in other words, ‘Don’t ask me how to know God. It can’t be done by you or me or anyone! It is God Himself who makes Himself known. Only He has the power to reveal Himself.’ What we can do is to open our hearts and minds, our souls, to receive the light of His Grace; and this alone is the skill, the art, if you will, that we must

acquire. The giving of His gifts is entirely in His hands. If anyone can dispute this of his own experience and has the power to experience the Self at his own whim and convenience, I have yet to hear of such a person.

The philosophers and sages of Kashmir Shaivism hold exactly this same view; furthermore, they hold that this Grace is absolutely undetermined and unconditioned. As it is stated in the *Tantraloka* of Abhinavagupta: “Divine Grace leads the individual to the path of spiritual realization. It is the only cause of Self-realization and is independent of human effort.” If it were dependent upon some conditions, it would not be absolute and independent Grace. Grace is the uncaused Cause of the soul’s release. What appears at first glance to be a condition of Grace, is, in reality, a consequence of it. For example, devotion, which may seem to bring Grace, is, in fact, the result or gift of Grace. In the Kashmir Shaivite tradition, the Absolute is said to carry on the sport of self-bondage and self-release of His own free will; and the postulation of conditions or qualifications would be against that doctrine of free will. This position is made clear in the *Malini Vijaya-vartika*:

The learned men of all times always hold that the descent of grace does not have any cause or condition but depends entirely on the free will of the Lord.

And, again, in the *Paramartha Sara*:

Throughout all these forms, it is the Lord who illumines His own nature. In reality, there is no other cause of these manifestations except His freedom, which alone gives rise to both worldly enjoyment and Self-realization.

Here, the question may arise that if Divine Grace has no regard for the merit and demerit of the recipients, does it not amount to an act of partiality on the part of God? How is it that He favors some individuals by bestowing His Grace and disfavors others by keeping it away from them? And the answer is that Grace is operative all the time for all individuals. The difference in the descent of Grace is really the differences in the receptivity of the individual souls, each of whom evolves at his own unique pace. Moreover, this problem does not have much significance in the Nondualist philosophies of Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism; because it is the Absolute Himself who appears first as bound, and then as liberated, owing to His own free will. He cannot be accused of partiality, since it is only Himself whom He favors or rejects.

As for self-effort, this is accomplished by our inherent power of will. Shakti, the Divine power of will, exists in us in a limited form. This will, which we possess, is the faculty by which a person decides upon and initiates action. Fickleness of mind flutters and weakens the will-power; and conversely, a strong desire and one-pointed longing strengthens it. But too many desires and hankerings after many objects, and aimless running about in pursuit of sense-pleasures dissipates the creative energy, the will-power. As one clear-minded sage said, “A definite purpose of action, backed by a strong will, is a sure way to success in any endeavor. Therefore, minimize your desires, make a deliberate choice, and focus the whole energy of your will-power in that particular direction, and you will never miss your goal.”

The will of a person may be made to flow in two different, and opposite, directions: outwardly, toward secular worldly goals, or inwardly, toward spiritual goals. If one wishes to concentrate one’s energy toward spiritual goals, then the creative energy, the will, must be diverted from its normal outward-flowing course; by closing all such outlets in the form of worldly desires, one at last attains the state of desirelessness. Then, it is possible to turn the mind inwardly to the Self and attain spiritual knowledge.

It is the desires for worldly objectives that distract one from the attainment of spiritual objectives. But, for one who is established in the pursuit of spiritual goals, worldly gains have little charm, and the necessary duties one must perform in the world take on a spiritual significance. To such a person, every act on the worldly plane is a service to the Lord, in the fulfillment of His will, and a stepping stone for the upward progress toward spiritual enlightenment.

Therefore, when the objective, or outward, trend of the will is checked, and is given a turn in the opposite direction, the “involved” Shakti begins its evolutionary journey; and, instead of experiencing a poverty of Shakti, a person begins to expand his or her powers, and to feel greater energy, intelligence, increased abilities and an expanded sense of well-being and completeness. Turning in the direction of its source, the mind begins to sense its identity with the Self, the pure and all-perfect Consciousness of the universe. This is the beginning of the evolution from the human to the Divine.

Now, if it were an easy thing to revert the flow of the will from worldly to spiritual objectives, everyone would be able to manage it. But it is not easy. The mind is

totally deluded by the amazing and wonderful appearance spread out before it; and, unaware that it is all its own projection, it reaches out eagerly for satisfaction and pleasure from the ephemeral and empty mirage. Intellectually acquired knowledge helps us to recognize the mirage for what it is—but still, old habits must be overcome. And that is not an easy task. To subdue the habits of nature, instilled by long practice and conviction, to subdue the old outgoing tendencies of the mind, requires great effort. This is known as *tapasya*.

To understand what *tapasya* is, we must understand that it is *Shakti*, the Divine Energy, which manifests as our minds and bodies and their various activities. And, frequently, we expend that Energy in thoughtless and frivolous ways, and thus remain listless and groggy through much of our lives. But, if we could learn to conserve our natural *Shakti*, then we could reap the benefits in the form of greater physical and mental energy, and a clearer awareness of the blissful Self, our eternal Identity. *Tapasya*, which literally means, “making heat,” is the restraint of the outgoing tendency of the mind and senses, which conserves and heats the *Shakti*. The *Shakti*, turned inward, then begins to nourish and invigorate the brain and the whole body, expanding one’s natural powers as well as one’s consciousness.

Here are some of the traditional methods of *tapasya* that help to conserve and evolve the *Shakti* toward its source, *Shiva* (the Self):

- (1) *Mantra repetition*: This conserves the *Shakti* by subduing the wandering mind and the *prana* and focusing the attention on God within.
- (2) *Devotional singing*: This heats the *Shakti* through emotion and elevates the awareness toward God. It is a form of devotional meditation that brings joy and satisfaction to the heart.
- (3) *Concentration of the mind*: By deep thought, attention, study, or meditation, the *Shakti* is concentrated and focused, and the mind becomes subtle and clear.
- (4) *Surrender of the fruits of actions*: This relieves the mind of futile exertions, conserving the *Shakti* and retaining the steadiness of the mind.
- (5) *Eating properly, moderately and regularly*: It is the *Shakti* which is the central regulator of the mind and body; it preserves the heat and cold of the body and distributes the effects of various foods and drinks to the different parts of the body, not only through the bloodstream, but through the nerve currents as well. The choice of a proper, moderate, and regular diet is therefore of great importance.
- (6) *Continence*: When the *Shakti* has been given an evolutionary turn and begins to flow inward and upward instead of outward through the senses, there is an accumulation of heat in the region near the base of the spine. It is there the

Shakti gathers and creates the heat which causes it to rise. Much of that heat is transferred to the sexual glands, causing an increase in stimulation there. If one allows that energy to be expended frivolously in sexual indulgence, one loses a great portion of one's *Shakti*. But if it is conserved, it rises, and is absorbed into the body and brain, resulting in greater bodily vigor and luster, as well as greater mental power. This is a practice recommended for *brahmacharis* or *sannyasins* (monks). Married men and women, of course, are exempt from this kind of *tapasya*; for such as these, normal moderation is best.

(7) *Longing for liberation:* Most important, for conserving and increasing the *Shakti*, is a strong aspiration toward, and longing for, liberation. Such aspiration is synonymous with the love of God, for such love is nothing more than a drawing of the heart toward the clarity and joy of absolute Truth. Such aspiration or love will draw the Grace of God and will focus the energy upward toward the seat of Consciousness and will be a strong counteractive to mental inertia and dullness.

According to the philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism, there are three different levels of spiritual practice; these levels, or methods (*upayas*), are: *anava upaya*, which is practice on the physical and sensual level; *shakta upaya*, which takes place on the mental, intellectual, level; and *shambhava upaya*, which engages the will and the intuition, and is on the astral or soul level. There is a fourth *upaya*, which is not really a practice at all, but an established awareness of the Self, and is therefore known as *anupaya*, or "no practice." This conceptual division can be simplified somewhat if we simply say that we exist on four levels: "the physical," "the mental," "the astral or soul-level" and "the spiritual." Our activities in pursuit of the Self take place on each of these progressively subtle levels and become increasingly effective as we reach to increasingly subtler levels of activity.

Without doubt, we are all complexly constituted of body, mind, soul, and Spirit. Indeed, all is Spirit, but that Spirit manifests in a progressively more tangible manner as soul, as mind, and as body. According to the subtlety of our awareness, we identify ourselves most predominantly with one or another of these levels of our reality. Normally, we are aware of ourselves as a mixture of several of these elements; but one or another aspect of ourselves is usually a predominant focus. For example, the athlete focuses predominantly on his or her physical fitness and measures his or her competency according to the abilities and qualities of the physical body. It would be foolish to say that the mind plays no part in such a person's awareness, but it is clear that much of the attention of that person's awareness is on their physical well-being and skills. This is true also of those

people who labor in the so-called "lower" echelons of trades requiring physical exertion and manual dexterity. We see this body-orientation much more exaggerated, of course, in the animal realm, where physical instinct predominates to a much greater degree, and the mental realm is little developed.

The person who identifies predominantly with the mind gives less attention to the physical body, and more attention to the comprehension and structuring of ideas. That person's focus is on exploring their understanding of ideas, mental task-accomplishments, and the comprehension of their world. They may be "intellectuals," or merely normal goal-oriented and career-oriented people. The more mentally developed may become writers, scientists, scholars, or technological experts; others comprise the vast majority of businessmen, teachers, white-collar workers, etc. Again, let me stress that, for most of us, there is a complex mixture of physical, mental, and soul-qualities at work in our lives, and none of these is omitted in our overall awareness; and yet, it is also certain that there is clearly a *predominant* focus on one or another of these aspects in each of our lives by which we may be "typed" in various ways.

The person who identifies predominantly with the soul is a person who has become opened to the subtler level of reality. Such persons are governed by a sense of the underlying unity of life, and strive to give expression to qualities of love, kindness, and compassion in their lives, with a strong sense of their purpose as a nurturing and inspiring presence in the world. Such people may become religious leaders, doctors, or crusaders for the social welfare. They are aware, not only of the tools they possess in the way of physical and mental abilities but are motivated to use these God-given tools to benefit others and to lead the world toward peace and brotherhood. The individualized "soul" is that conglomerate of deeply ingrained qualities, evolved over many lifetimes, which makes up the character and purpose of an individual; and the person who identifies with the soul is one whose greatest emphasis is on perfecting the qualities of wisdom and love and on manifesting their own unique destiny in a way which will better themselves and all mankind. There is in the soul a clearer awareness of one's source in Spirit, and so with those who identify with the soul there is a strong desire to manifest that unifying Spirit, and to draw ever nearer to awareness of their own ultimate Being.

That ultimate Existent is the Spirit. The Spirit is that unmanifest Source from which all beings manifest. It is the unqualified Ground of all existence, which, in Itself, transcends all manifestation. It has been spoken of as pure Consciousness and Bliss; It has been spoken of as Brahman, God, or the supreme Self of all. It is

that eternal Self with which the saints—the most evolved human beings—identify. They see that the body, mind, and soul are transient elements of their being, and that the One Spirit is their unchanging and eternal Identity. And they hold to their identification with that, paying but passing attention to the demands of body, mind, and soul. They realize that these have but a transient existence and will go on, by the operation of natural laws, but that they do not constitute their true Essence nor their purest happiness.

Those who identify with the Spirit, the eternal Self, find little to attract them to physical, mental or soul activity and accomplishments. Rather, they seek, and find, their greatest happiness and contentment in the awareness of their pure Being, beyond body, mind or soul. Such as these have no established place in the world; they are beyond the world of other men and women. Their vocation is to live in close union with God, and, though they may be regarded as monks, renunciants, or simply as societal outcastes, they serve as emissaries of the Divine. They act, to be sure. They are not without thoughts. Their souls have become expanded to include all souls in the One in whom they subsist, and their actions and thoughts derive from their Identity as the all-inclusive One; and, though their value is not recognized by the people of the world who are busily engaged in their own self-involved thoughts and activities, such people give clarity and light to the world, and serve as magnets to draw others to the all-gratifying Truth which exists within them all.

In the ancient world of Vedic India, this rudimentary division of peoples was translated into a set of classes or "castes," and was recognized as a natural fact of life; but as time went on, these stratifications of society became calcified into rigid air-tight compartments into which one was born and from which there was no escape. What had been an observation of natural evolution became an inflexible societal stratification based on racial and familial association. This was, of course, a distortion and corruption of what had been a keen observation of the varied levels of human awareness. That observation—that people do indeed fall roughly into several broad "types" according to the evolution of their awareness—remains, nonetheless, a valid one.

Recall how, in the Indian epic, the *Ramayana*, Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu, asks Hanuman, his monkey-servant (representative of the individualized soul), "How do you regard me?" And Hanuman replies, "When I regard myself as the body, I am your servant; when I regard myself as the mind, I am a part of you; and when I regard myself as the spirit, the Self, you and I are one." Note that

Hanuman's realization became more subtle and closer to the absolute Truth as he went from identification with the physical body to the mind, and from the mind to the Spirit. From the perspective of Kashmir Shaivism, all our efforts toward personal growth and Self-realization manifest on one or another of these levels of reality. At the grossest level, we identify with the body; we regard ourselves as the servant of God, as His instrument; we perform physical acts: acts of service, ritual worship, Hatha yoga postures, the sounding of mantras, etc. These are necessary and beneficial practices, but they are at the gross physical level only; we must go deeper toward the subtle if we are to reach God.

The next level of activity is the mental. Here, we perform many practices: we study the scriptures and other writings of the realized saints; we do mental worship, such as prayer, or the mental repetition of the name of God; we continually attempt to refine our understanding and remind ourselves inwardly of the truth of the Spirit. And here, at this stage where we identify with the mind, we come to regard ourselves as a spark or a ray from the one Sun, which manifests and illumines the world. All is seen as God, and we are a part of Him.

Then, on the soul level, the activity is very subtle; we may also call it the level of consciousness. It is simply the constant alertness to reject any obscuration of conscious awareness. It is the jealous guarding of the pure Consciousness that is the witness, the Self. At that level, there is no duality of I and Thou, mine and Thine; there is only *I AM*. Notice that each one of these levels of activity leads to the next, subtler, level. For example, when you do physical acts of service, or worship, this brings with it the mental level of service or worship, as our concentration deepens. Or, if we repeat the name of God on the physical level, such as when we chant aloud, that physical repetition brings with it, by sympathetic resonance, the mental awareness of the name, and we find that we're repeating the mantra on the mental level as well. The idea, of course, is for our worship, our prayer, our meditation, to reach to deeper and deeper levels of subtlety, becoming a transforming force to recreate us at the spiritual level.

Practice at the mental level is superior, of course, to mere physical action, because it is by the transformation of our mind that we truly become transformed into Divine beings. As Krishna said to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*, "The Self is realized by the purified mind!" This is also what Jesus taught when he explained that it was the pure in heart who would see God. Also, we have seen what great emphasis is placed on the mental practice of Self-knowledge by the great Shankaracharya, who said, "The practice of knowledge thoroughly purifies the

ignorance-stained mind, and then that [intellectual] knowledge itself disappears, just as a grain of salt disappears in water.”

Shankara’s analogy can be easily understood by one whose concentration on the knowledge, “I am pure Consciousness,” leads the mind, through concentrated effort toward understanding, and eventually to perfect mental quietude, and the direct experience of pure Consciousness. Through one-pointed concentration on this one thought, “I am not merely this body, this mind; I am the Absolute; I am pure Consciousness,” one goes beyond thought and attains the thought-free state. It is in this way that the mental practice leads to the subtler level of spiritual practice. The story of king Janaka and Ashtavakra is a good illustration of this:

King Janaka was sitting one day on the riverbank, repeating his mantra aloud. In a loud, powerful voice, he repeated over and over *So-ham, So-ham, So-ham*; “I am That! I am That! I am That!” Then, along came his guru, Ashtavakra, who sat on the opposite bank. Observing that king Janaka was involved in the physical practice of mantra-repetition, with maybe a touch of mental practice thrown in, Ashtavakra decided to elevate king Janaka’s practice. So, he began to shout aloud, “This is my water bowl! This is my staff!” And, as he did so, he alternately lifted each of the items mentioned. Ashtavakra continued this for a long time, shouting at the top of his voice, “This is my water bowl! This is my staff!”

Soon the king’s mantra-repetition was disrupted, and he quickly became annoyed. Finally, he could take it no more, and he shouted across to Ashtavakra, “Hey, why all this racket? I know those things belong to you; who says they’re *not* yours?” And Ashtavakra shot back, “And who says you are *not* the Self?” Immediately king Janaka’s mind ceased its activity and became absorbed in the silent awareness that he *was* the Self and didn’t need to go on engaging his lips or his mind in repeatedly asserting it. In other words, by the grace of his guru, his mental practice merged into the soul’s awareness of its identity with the Self.

This practice does not call into play either the body or the mind, but rather what we would call simply, “the will.” It is the practice of keeping a willful check on the impulses of the mind, and a willful retention of pure awareness, with a sense of identification with the one all-pervasive Consciousness. It is, in other words, a direct soul-awareness through the effort of will. In its highest stage, this subtle practice becomes no practice at all. It simply remains spontaneously, habitually. It is the state of consciousness which the Zen Buddhists call the state of “No-mind,”

which Vedantists refer to as *sahaj samadhi*, “the natural state of unity,” and Kashmir Shaivites refer to as *anupaya*.

To explain how one level of practice leads to a subtler level, let’s take, as an example, the practice of mantra repetition. You may begin by just repeating it on the physical level. And, even on this level, the sound-vibrations have a certain effect on you, instilling peace and a sense of well-being. Then, you begin to reflect on its meaning. Now, it is no longer just a sound; it’s a meaningful thought: *So-ham*. The mind translates the sound into “I am That; I am the one Self.” That is the mental practice. You repeat the mantra on the mental level with an awareness of its meaning. Then, as you begin to sense the reality of it, as you begin to experience it, you transcend the mantra, and hold yourself poised in the thought-free state. That’s the level of soul-awareness, and is very close to the awareness of Spirit, or the Self. When, eventually, this awareness deepens, one loses all sense of body, mind, or soul, and, transcending all practice, becomes immersed in the awareness of the Self.

Now, to make all this really clear, here are some sample practices from each of these three levels derived from an ancient scripture of Kashmir Shaivism, one of the *agamas*, called *Vijnana Bhairava*, which is said to be a distillation of an earlier text called *Rudrayamala Tantra*, passed down from Shiva himself. “Bhairava” is another name for Shiva, the Lord, the Self. And “Vijnana” means supreme awareness, or knowledge. And it takes the form of a dialogue between Shiva and his consort, Shakti.

In this imaginary dialogue, Shakti asks Shiva to explain His true nature and the practices by which he can be known; and Shiva then details 112 different practices, utilizing those from each of the three levels we’ve discussed. First, we’ll hear of some of the physical practices, some of which have to do with the subtle breath, the *prana*, or the visualizing of inner lights and sounds. Listen to some of the practices Shiva recommends to Shakti. You might like to try them out as I mention them to you:

The breath is exhaled with the sound, *Ham*, and inhaled with the sound, *Sah*. Thus, the individual soul always recites the mantra, *Hamsah* (or *So-ham*, “I am That!”). ³

Prana goes upward (with the inhalation), and the *apana* goes downward (with the exhalation). This is the expression of the creative Shakti. By becoming aware of the two places where each originates, experience absolute fulfillment. ⁴

There is a momentary pause, when the outgoing breath has gone out, and there is a momentary pause when the ingoing breath has gone in. Fix your mind steadily on these places of pause, and experience Shiva.⁵

Always fix your mind on those places where the breath pauses, and the mind will quickly cease its fluctuations, and you will acquire a wonderful state. ⁶

In the *Bhagavad Gita* (4:29), Krishna says, “Some yogis, devoted to *pranayama* (the control of the *prana*), offer as sacrifice the outgoing breath into the incoming breath, and the incoming into the outgoing, restraining the course of both.” It is this very practice that is being spoken of here in the *Vijnana Bhairava*, which goes on to say:

When the in-breath merges with the outgoing breath, they become perfectly balanced and cease to flow. Experience that state and realize equality. ⁷

Let the breath remain balanced and let all thoughts cease; then experience the state of Shiva. ⁸

That’s enough practices on the physical level; let’s move on to the mental practices. Here, we enter into the realm of ideas. These practices deal entirely with formulated intellectual knowledge. Shiva says to Shakti:

Concentrate your mind on whatever gives you satisfaction. Then experience the true nature of supreme satisfaction. ⁹

Meditate on yourself as a vast, cloudless sky, and realize your true nature as Consciousness. ¹⁰

Becoming detached from the awareness of the body, meditate on the thought, “I am everywhere!” and thus experience joy. ¹¹

Hold this thought in your mind: ‘All the waves of the various forms in this universe have arisen from me—just as waves arise from water, flames arise from fire, or rays from the Sun.’ ¹²

Contemplate with an unwavering mind that your own body and the whole universe are of the nature of Consciousness and experience the great awakening. ¹³

Contemplate your body and the whole universe as permeated with Bliss. Then experience yourself as that Bliss. ¹⁴

And then we come to the practices involving the soul; these are at a yet subtler level of consciousness. Here, you don’t have to think at all. You need only to become aware, focusing on that clear, thought-free awareness that is your soul, an individualized manifestation of the Self. Shiva says:

Observe the arising of a desire. Then immediately put an end to it by reabsorbing it into That from which it arose. ¹⁵

What are you when a thought or desire does *not* arise?
Truly, the one Reality! Become absorbed in and identified with That. ¹⁶

When a thought or desire arises, detach yourself from the object of thought or desire, and witness the thought or desire as a manifestation of your Self, and thus realize the Truth. ¹⁷

The same conscious Self is manifest in all forms; there is no differentiation in It. Realize everything as the same One and rise triumphantly above the appearance of multiplicity. ¹⁸

When under a strong impulse of desire, or anger, greed, infatuation, pride, or envy, make your mind steady and become aware of the Reality underlying the mental state. ¹⁹ Perceive the entire universe as a magic-show, or as forms painted on a canvas, or as so many leaves on a single tree; and becoming absorbed in this, experience great happiness. ²⁰

Leaving aside your own body for the time being, contemplate your Self as the consciousness pervading other bodies, and thus become all-pervasive. ²¹

Free the mind of all supports, without and within, and let no thought-vibration take form. Then the self becomes the supreme Self, Shiva. ²²

At the onset or culmination of a sneeze, or at the moment of fright, or deep sorrow, or at the moment of a sigh, or while running for your life, or during intense fascination, or extreme hunger, become aware of Brahman. ²³

What cannot be objectively known, what cannot be held in the mind, that which is empty, and exists even in non-existence: contemplate That as your Self, and thus attain realization of Shiva. ²⁴

Meditate on yourself as eternal, all-pervasive, the independent Lord of all; and, thus, attain That. ²⁵

About *anupaya*, the ultimate state beyond all practice, there is really nothing one can say. It is the reversion of the soul to its universal Source. In such a state, one is on a pathless path, beyond the bodily, mental or astral levels. Immersed in God-awareness, there is no more striving, for there is nothing more to attain. There is no action, no thought, no individual awareness. There is only the pure Bliss of the Self.

Here is what Jnaneshvar, the 13th century yogi, says in his *Amritanubhav* about such a state:

One who has attained this wisdom may say whatever he likes; the silence of his contemplation remains undisturbed. His state of actionlessness remains unaffected, even though he performs countless actions. Whether he walks in the streets or remains sitting quietly, he is always in his own home. His rule of conduct is his own sweet will. His meditation is whatever he happens to be doing. ²⁶

Such a knower of the Self lives in perfect freedom. You too, by utilizing all these practices—of the body, the mind and the soul—can attain eventually to that

(fourth) state. As you meditate, just sit quietly; let the mind be still and become aware of the Self. If you can't do that immediately, then take the help of the mantra, the name of God, the name of the Self. Reflect on its meaning. Identify with that One. And if you cannot do that, at least practice on the physical level: repeat the mantra with the in-breath, and again with the out-breath. Let it carry you to the awareness that you and your beloved God are one.

NOTES:

1. See my account in Swami Abhayananda, *The Supreme Self*, downloadable at www.themysticsvision.com, or in the excerpt from that book, "My Enlightenment Experience", presented as the first article in the fourth Section of this collection: "God's Grace".
2. Jesus, *The New Testament of the Bible*, Luke, 18:18; Matthew, 19:16.
3. *Vijnana Bhairava*, 155.
4. *Ibid.*, 24.
5. *Ibid.*, 25
6. *Ibid.*, 51.
7. *Ibid.*, 64.
8. *Ibid.*, 26.
9. *Ibid.*, 74.
10. *Ibid.*, 92.
11. *Ibid.*, 104.
12. *Ibid.*, 110.
13. *Ibid.*, 63.

14. *Ibid.*, 65.

15. *Ibid.*, 96.

16. *Ibid.*, 97.

17. *Ibid.*, 98.

18. *Ibid.*, 100.

19. *Ibid.*, 101.

20. *Ibid.*, 102.

21. *Ibid.*, 107.

22. *Ibid.*, 108.

23. *Ibid.*, 118.

24. *Ibid.*, 127.

25. *Ibid.*, 132.

26. Jnaneshvar, *Amritanubhav*, 9:20, 21, 31, 34; Swami Abhayananda, *Jnaneshvar: The Life & Works of The Celebrated 13th Century Indian Mystic-Poet*, Olympia, Wash., 1989, 1994; pp. 207, 208.

* * *

21. Enduring Nondual Awareness (10-14-2015)

Is there such a thing as enlightenment? Many would say “it depends on what you mean by ‘enlightenment’”; and “enlightenment” can mean pretty much whatever you want it to. For some, it means an “enduring nondual awareness”, and that’s probably as good a definition as any. But we have to ask, “What does *that* mean?” and “How does it manifest?” Would some ‘mystical’ experience in which you enjoyed nondual awareness for a period of time be enough to qualify as enlightenment? Many spiritual teachers say, ‘No’, and insist that, however wonderful a temporary “mystical experience” may be, the summit of spiritual attainment does not consist of mere transient experiences that come and then go but consists rather of a constant abidance in the awareness of nonduality,” while living in this world.

It’s worth noting that you will find no mention of the attainment of a “permanent” nondual awareness in the writings of Western mystics such as Plato, Plotinus, or in Meister Eckhart or any of the medieval Western mystics. It is, however, implied in some Eastern scriptures such as the Upanishads, in the remarks attributed to the Buddha, in the writings attributed to the medieval Indian sage, Shankaracharya, who speaks of such a state as *moksha*, or “liberation”, and in the writings of the modern sage, Sri Ramana Maharshi.

But are we to believe in the possibility of an “enduring nondual awareness” based on a faith in the veracity of the statements of one or another self-proclaimed enlightened sage? We *may* accept it on faith, or we may infer such a permanent state by observing that person’s actions and the influence they have on others. But there is no absolutely reliable standard by which one may accurately gauge the state of another’s awareness; and so, if such a ‘permanent’ state is possible, its existence can only be truly substantiated by one’s own personal experience, just as the awareness ‘I am’ is substantiated only by personal experience.

Clearly, if such an enduring state exists, and is attainable, it has rarely been attained, even among those whom we consider the holiest of men. And where its attainment has been claimed, it remains unverifiable. What is certain is that *I* do not know how to attain it. My position has been and continues to be that only the Lord, the Divine Mind, is capable of granting an experience of the non-dual Reality. I am always open to the possibility of God’s grace, and I am open to an increase in selflessness initiated through some purifying thought-process of my

own; though I would certainly question what ‘my own’ means, in view of the fact that ‘I’ am a manifestation of Him—as though ‘my own’ could be divorced from ‘His own’, from ‘His grace’.

I do not refute the idea that one can experience the eternal Reality on more than one occasion, and thereby live in a heightened awareness of the divine reality; in fact, I believe that I and many others do live in such a state through an intense daily intention and direction of awareness toward God. But if you mean by ‘enlightenment’ someone living in a permanent state of *samadhi*, a permanent state of transcendence, then I don’t see how that is possible so long as one is in this world.

My own brief experience of mergence in the Eternal did allow me to continue to operate in the phenomenal world during that experience, but only to a limited degree. Since then, I have not been able to even re-enter the awareness of that eternal (non-dual) reality, let alone abide in it. In the nonduality that I was graced to experience, I had been somehow lifted up in consciousness, and was enabled to know that my manifestation as an individual was truly a manifestation of the one divine Reality. My idea of “enduring nondual awareness” is therefore of an endless continuation of that awareness, which I hope to experience after leaving this world; but I don’t know if it is something that is attainable while living within the realm of duality. Whether or not it is attainable depends entirely on the inscrutable will of God.

NOTES:

1. Also see my article, “The Retention of Divine Awareness (4-26-2014)”.

* * *

IV. GOD'S GRACE

The “mystical” revelation of one’s divine Identity comes, not from any act or effort of one’s own, but from the compassionate Will of God, as a gift of His merciful Grace. Anyone who has received that Grace will acknowledge that it came by no merit of his own, by no deed or power of his own, but solely by an act of Divine Grace bestowed upon him. Even if that Grace comes by way of a divine intermediary, such as a holy man, it is God’s Grace, and has no other source. It reveals to the recipient that he or she is a manifestation of God’s Being, is in fact nothing but God’s own Self in human form.

1. My Enlightenment Experience (from *The Supreme Self*, 1984)

My little cabin in the redwoods was cool in the summer, but damp in the winter, as I discovered that first winter in '66. The little babbling brook swelled to a cascading Colorado river in my backyard, and I had to catch water coming down the slope from the road in little waterfalls to get clear water for drinking or cooking. Each night I sat close to the cast-iron cooking stove, with the little side door open so I could watch the dancing blue and gold flames sizzle the oak logs and turn them to glowing ash.

Day and night, during the California winter, the rain drizzled outside the window in a steady, gray, time-dissolving continuum. In the mornings, I'd prepare oatmeal and a bath by the stove; I'd pour hot water from a pitcher over my body onto the concrete floor, and then sweep it outside. The rain would stop sometimes during the day, and then I would go out and walk the once dusty logging roads through the woods and up through the meadows in the high ground. "Hari! Hari! Hari!" was my continual call.

The dark skies kept my energies subdued, and my mind indrawn. My days passed uneventfully. It was in the night that the embers of my heart began to glow keenly as I sat in the dark, watching the fire contained in the stove. A stillness—sharp-edged and intense—filled my cabin and I spoke very closely, very intimately, with the God who had drawn me there. And He would sometimes speak to me in the stillness of the night, while I wrote down His words.

Hari became my only thought, my only love. And while the days and nights became endless stretches of grayness, wetness, my mind became brighter and brighter with an intense light that displayed every wandering thought that arose as a compelling drama in bold Technicolor and Panavision; and then I would pull my mind back with "Hari!" I had realized that I could have or become whatever I settled for in my mind; and I was determined to refuse every inspiration that was not God Himself. I was steadfastly resolved to refuse all visualizations, all mental wanderings, holding my mind in continual remembrance and longing for Hari alone.

In the evening twilight, I'd sing to Him, to the tune of *Danny Boy*:

O Adonai, at last the day is dying;
 My heart is stilled as darkness floods the land.
 I've tried and tried, but now I'm through with tryin';
 It's You, it's You, must take me by the hand,
 And lead me home where all my tears and laughter
 Fade into bliss on Freedom's boundless shore.
 And I'll be dead and gone forever after;
 O Adonai, just You, just You alone, forevermore.

Or, sometimes, I'd sing this song, to the tune of *Across The Wide Missouri*:

O Adonai, I long to see you!
 All the day, my heart is achin'.
 O Adonai, my heart is achin';
 O where, O where are you?
 Don't leave me here forsaken.
 O Adonai, the day is over;
 Adonai, I'm tired and lonely.
 My tears have dried, and I'm awaitin'
 You; O Adonai,
 You know I love you only.

Sometimes, to focus my mind on Him, to bring devotion to my sometimes dry and empty heart, I'd read from Thomas á Kempis' *Imitation Of Christ*—a version which I had pared down from the original; and this had the invariable effect of lifting my heart to love of God, and brought me, as though by sympathetic resonance, to the same sweet simple devotion and purity of heart evidenced by that sweet monk of the 15th century. I felt so much kinship with him, so much identification with him, that I came to love his little book above all other works for its sweet effect on me.

Then, deep into the night, I'd sit in silent prayer; my wakefulness burning like a laser of intensely focused yearning, a penetrating, searching light-house of hope in the black interior of the cabin, as I

witnessed the play of the flickering flames dying out in the stove's interior. On one such night, filled with Divine love, the understanding came to me that it was just this Love that was drawing me to Itself within me. It was this Love that was the Soul of my soul, calling me to live in Its constant light. I lit a candle; a song was being written in my notebook, and I was understanding very clearly, very vividly, just what it was that I loved, what it was that I was pledging my life to:

Thou art Love, and I shall follow all Thy ways.
 I shall have no care, for Love cares only to love.
 I shall have no fear, for Love is fearless;
 Nor shall I frighten any, for Love comes sweetly and meek.
 I shall keep no violence within me,
 Neither in thought nor in deed, for Love comes peacefully.
 I shall bear no shield or sword,
 For the defense of Love is love.
 I shall seek Thee in the eyes of men,
 For love seeks Thee always.
 I shall keep silence before Thine enemies,
 And lift to them Thy countenance,
 For all are powerless before Thee.
 I shall keep Thee in my heart with precious care,
 Lest Thy light be extinguished by the winds;
 For without Thy light, I am in darkness.
 I shall go free in the world with Thee—
 Free of all bondage to anything but Thee—
 For Thou art my God, the sole Father of my being,
 The sweet breath of Love that lives in my heart;
 And I shall follow Thee, and live with Thee,
 And lean on Thee till the end of my days.

November 18, 1966:

This was the night I was to experience God. This was the night I learned who I am eternally. All day long the rain had been dripping outside my cabin window. And now the silent night hovered around me. I sat motionless, watching the dying coals in the stove. "Hari!" my mind called in the wakeful silence of my interior. During the

whole day, I had felt my piteous plight so sorrowfully, so maddeningly; “Dear Lord, all I want is to die in Thee,” I cried within myself. “I have nothing, no desire, no pleasure in this life—but in Thee. Won’t you come and take this worthless scrap, this feeble worm of a soul, back into Thyself!”

“O Father,” I cried, “listen to my prayer! I am Thine alone. Do come and take me into Thy heart. I have no other goal, but Thee and Thee alone.”

Then I became very quiet. I sat emptied, but very awake, listening to God’s silence. I balanced gingerly, quakingly, on the still clarity of nothingness. I became aware that I was scarcely breathing. My breath was very shallow, nearly imperceptible—close to the balance point, where it would become non-existent. And my eyes peered into the darkness with a wide-eyed intensity that amazed me. I knew my pupils must be very large. I felt on the brink of a meeting with absolute clearness of mind. I hovered there, waiting. And then, from somewhere in me, from a place deeper than I even knew existed, a prayer came forth that, I sensed, must have been installed in my heart at the moment of my soul-birth in the mind of God: “Dear God, let me be one with Thee, not that I might glory in Thy love, but that I might speak out in Thy praise and to Thy glory for the benefit of all Thy children.”

It was then, in that very moment, that the veil fell away. Something in me changed. Suddenly I *knew*; I experienced infinite Unity. And I thought, “Of course; it’s been me all the time! Who else could I possibly be!” I lit a candle, and by the light of the flickering flame, while seated at the card table in my little cabin, I transmitted to paper what I was experiencing in eternity. Here is the “Song” that was written during that experience (the commentaries in parentheses which follow each verse were added much later):

O my God, even this body is Thine own!

(Suddenly I knew that this entity which I call my body was God’s own, was not separate from God, but was part of the continuous ocean of Consciousness; and I exclaimed in my

heart, “O my God, even this body is Thine own!” There was no longer any me distinct from that one Consciousness; for that illusion was now dispelled.)

Though I call to Thee and seek Thee amidst chaos,
Even I who seemed an unclean pitcher amidst Thy
waters—
Even I am Thine own.

(Heretofore, I had called to God in the chaos of a multitude of thoughts, a multitude of voices and motions of mind—the very chaos of hell. And in my calling, I was as though standing apart from God; I felt myself to be an unclean pitcher immersed in the ocean of God, dividing the waters within from the water without. Though God was in me and God was without, there had still remained this illusion of ‘me’. But now the idea of a separating ‘ego’ was gone. And I was aware that I—this whole conglomerate of body, mind, consciousness, which I call “I”—am none else but that One, and belong to that One, besides whom there is nothing.)

Does a wave cease to be of the ocean?

(A wave is only a form that arises out of the ocean and is nothing but ocean. In the same way, my form was as a wave of pure Consciousness, of pure God. How had I imagined it to be something else? And yet it was that very ignorance that had previously prevented me from seeing the truth.)

Do the mountains and the gulfs cease to be of the earth?

(Mountains and valleys in relation to the earth, like waves in relation to the ocean, seem to have an independent existence, an independent identity; yet they are only irregularities, diverse forms, of the earth itself.)

Or does a pebble cease to be stone?

(A pebble is, of course, nothing but stone—just as I now realized in growing clarity that I was none else but the one ‘stuff’ of Existence. Even though I seemed to be a unique entity separate from the rest of the universe, I was really a piece of the universal Reality, as a pebble is really a piece of stone.)

How can I escape Thee?
Thou art even That which thinks of escape!

(Thought too is a wave on the ocean of God. The thought of separation—can that be anything but God? The very tiniest motion of the mind is like the leaping of the waves on the ocean of Consciousness, and the fear of leaping clear of the ocean is a vain one for the wave. That which thinks of separation is that very Consciousness from which there can never ever be any separation. That One contains everything within It. So, what else could I, the thinker, be?)

Even now, I speak the word, “Thou,” and create duality.

(Here, now, as I write, as I think of God and speak to Him as “Thou,” I am creating a duality between myself and God where no duality exists in truth. It is the creation of the mind. Having habituated itself to separation, the mind creates an “I” and a “Thou,” and thus experiences duality.)

I love and create hatred.

(Just as for every peak there’s a valley, so the thought of love that arises in the mind has, as its valley, as its opposite, hatred. The impulse of the one creates the other, as the creation of a north pole automatically creates a south pole, or as “beauty” necessitates “ugliness,” or as “up” brings along with it “down,” or as “ahead” gives birth to “behind.” The nature of the

mind is such that it creates a world of duality where only the One actually is.)

I am in peace and am fashioning chaos.

(The very nature of God's phenomenal creation is also dual; His cosmic creation alternates from dormant to dynamic, while He, Himself, remains forever unchanging. In the same way, while our consciousness remains unmoved, the mind is in constant alternation. For example, when it is stilled, it is like a spring compressed, representing potential dynamic release. The mind's peace, therefore, is itself the very mother of its activity.)

Standing on the peak, I necessitate the depths.

(Just as the peak of the wave necessitates the trough of the wave [since you can't have one without the other], wakefulness necessitates sleep, good necessitates its opposite. Exultation in joy is paid for with despair; they are an inseparable pair.)

But now, weeping and laughing are gone;
Night is become day.

(But now I am experiencing the transcendent "stillness" of the One, where this alternation, this duality, of which creation is made, is no more. It is a clear awareness that all opposites are derived from the same ONE and are therefore dissolved. Laughing and its opposite, weeping, are the peak and the trough which have become leveled in the stillness of the calmed ocean, the rippleless surface of the waters of Consciousness. Night and day have no meaning here: All is eternity.)

Music and silence are heard as one.

(Sound, silence—both are contained in the eternal Consciousness which cannot be called silent, which cannot be called sound; It produces all sounds, yet, as their source, It is silence. Both are united in the One of which they consist.)

My ears are all the universe.

(There is only Me. Even the listening is Me.)

All motion has ceased;
Everything continues.

(The activity of the universe does not exist for Me, yet everything is still in motion as before. It is only that I am beyond both motion and non-motion. For I am the Whole; all motion is contained in Me, yet I Myself am unmoving.)

Life and death no longer stand apart.

(From where I am, the life and death of individual beings is less than a dream—so swiftly generations rise and fall, rise and fall! Whole eons of creation pass like a dream in an instant. Where then are life and death? How do they differ? They too are but an artificial duality that is resolved in the One timeless Self.)

No I, no Thou;
No now, or then.

(There is no longer a reference “I” that refers to a separate individual entity; there is no longer anything separate to refer to as “Thou.” This one knowing Consciousness which is I is all that exists or ever existed. Likewise, there is no “now” or “then”, for time pertains only to the dream and has no meaning here beyond all manifestation.)

Unless I move, there is no stillness.

(Stillness, too, is but a part of duality, bringing into existence motion. Motion and stillness, the ever-recurring change, are the dream constituents in the dream of duality! Stillness without motion cannot be. Where I am, neither of these exists.)

Nothing to lament, nothing to vanquish;

(Lament? In the pure sky of infinity, who is there to lament? What is there to doubt? Where there is no other, but only this One, what error or obstacle could there be? What is there to stand in the way of infinity? What is there other than Me?)

Nothing to pride oneself on—
All is accomplished in an instant.

(Pride belongs only to man, that tiny doll, that figment of imagination who, engrossed in the challenge of conflict with other men, prides himself on his petty accomplishments. Here, whole universes are created in an instant and destroyed, and everything that is accomplished is accomplished by the One. Where, then, is pride?)

All may now be told without effort.

(Here am I, with a view to the Eternal, and my hand writing in the world of creation, in the world of men. What a wonderful opportunity to tell all to eager humanity! Everything is known without the least effort. Let me tell it, let me share it, let me reveal it!)

Where is there a question?

(But see! Where everything is very simply and obviously Myself, what question could there be? Here, the

possibility of a question cannot arise. Who could imagine a more humorous situation?)

Where is the temple?

(What about explaining the secrets of the soul, and how it is encased in that temple of God called 'the body?' That secret does not exist; for, when all is seen and experienced as one Being, where is that which may be regarded as the receptacle, the temple?)

Which the Imperishable?

Which the abode?

(Which may I call the imperishable God, the Eternal? And which may I call the vessel in which God exists and lives? Consciousness does not perish. The Energy of which this body consists does not perish. All is eternal; there is no differentiation here.)

I am the pulse of the turtle;
I am the clanging bells of joy.

(I am everywhere! I am life! I am the very heartbeat of even the lowliest of creatures. It is I who surge in the heart as joy, as surging joy like the ecstatic abandonment of clanging bells.)

I bring the dust of blindness;
I am the fire of song.

(I am the cause of man's ignorance of Me, yet it is I who leap in his breast as the exultation of song.)

I am in the clouds and I am in the gritty soil;
In pools of clear water my image is found.

(I am that billowing beauty in the sky; I play in all these forms! And the gritty soil which produces the verdure of the earth—I am that soil, that black dirt. I am every tiny pebble of grit, cool and moist. And when, as man, I lean over the water, I discover My image, and see Myself shining in My own eyes.

I am the dust on the feet of the wretched,
The toothless beggars of every land.

(I live in the dust that covers the calloused feet of those thin, ragged holy men who grin happily at you as you pass them by.)

I have given sweets that decay to those who
crave them;
I have given my wealth unto the poor and
lonely.

(Each of my manifestations, according to their understanding, receives whatever they wish of the transitory pleasures of the world; but the wealth of My peace, My freedom, My joy, I give to those who seek no other wealth, who seek no other joy, but Me.)

My hands are open—nothing is concealed.

(I have displayed all My wealth; according to his evolution, his wisdom, each chooses what he will have in this life.)

All things move together of one accord;
Assent is given throughout the universe to every falling
grain.

(All is one concerted whole; everything works together, down to the tiniest detail, in the flower-like unfoldment of this world. All is the doing of the One.)

The Sun stirs the waters of My heart,
And the vapor of My love flies to the four corners of the
world.

*(Like a thousand-rayed sunburst of joy, My love showers
forth as the universe of stars and planets and men. And
then, this day of manifestation gives way to the night of
dissolution ...)*

The Moon stills Me, and the cold darkness is My
bed.

*(And the universe withdraws into My utter darkness of
stillness and rest.)*

I have but breathed, and everything is rearranged
And set in order once again.

*(The expansion and contraction of this entire universe is
merely an out-breath and an in-breath; a mere sigh.)*

A million worlds begin and end in every breath,

*(And, flung out into the endless reaches of infinity,
worlds upon worlds evolve, enact their tumultuous
dramas, and then withdraw from the stage once more.
This cycle repeats itself again and again; the universe
explodes from a single mass, expands as gas, and
elements form. Eventually they become living organisms,
which evolve into intelligent creatures, culminating in
man. And one by one each learns the secret that puts an
end to their game. And again, the stars reach the fullness
of their course; again, everything is drawn back to its
source....)*

And, in this breathing, all things are sustained.

* * *

After this, I collapsed in bed, exhausted by the sheer strain of holding my mind on so keen an edge. When I awoke, it was morning. Immediately, I recalled the experience of the night before, and arose. I went outside to the sunlight, dazed and disoriented. I bent, and took up a handful of gravel, letting it slip slowly through my fingers. "I am in this?" I asked dumbfoundedly.

I felt as though I had been thrust back into a dream from which I had no power to awaken. My only thought was to return to that state I had known the night before. I rushed up the twisted road and scrambled up the hill to the cliff on top of the world, above the forest and ocean, where I had often conversed with God; and I sat there, out of breath, praying, with tears running down my cheeks, for Him to take me back into Himself. Before long, a chill blanket of gray fog, which had risen up from the ocean below, swept over me, engulfing me in a misty cloud. And after a few moments, I reluctantly went back, down the mountain.

* * *

NOTES:

1. This brief account is excerpted from Swami Abhayananda, *The Supreme Self*, Fallsburg, N.Y., Atma Books, 1984. I encourage all to read this book in its entirety. This book is freely downloadable along with many of my more recent books and articles at my website: www.themysticsvision.com.

* * *

2. Enlightenment And Grace

(from *The Divine Universe* (2008; revised 12-27-2015))

In his several books, the highly respected psychologist and philosopher, Ken Wilber, offers a detailed and well thought-out conceptual framework for understanding and talking about the fundamental levels of experience: spiritual, mental and physical, corresponding to mystical, psychological, and scientific (empiric) knowledge. I wish to acknowledge Mr. Wilber's superior analytical vision and the very helpful framework of understanding which he has provided. However—and there is always a “however”—we are individuals with decidedly different personal proclivities, sensibilities, and styles, and there are bound to arise a number of areas in which we see things slightly differently.

Wilber stresses in most of his writings that the perennial vision of the mystics is of a hierarchic (or, more accurately, *holarchic*) reality, which he refers to as ‘the great Chain of Being’, in which each whole is nested in its higher (subtler) level of reality, with the non-dual One at its summit. The one absolute Source, being unqualified and indivisible, is the Ground and hierarchical whole (holon) of all that follows from It; but It is also the evolutionary Goal toward which all conscious beings are drawn. Thus, there is an involution of Spirit that can be described, in its simplest form, as a descent from Spirit to mind, to matter. And evolution is the process in reverse. We may regard this Spiritual paradigm as “the perennial philosophy”.

What, then, are the implications of the perennial philosophy (as derived from spiritual vision) for empirical science? In other words, how can we reconcile the data derived from the subtle vision of the mystics with the data of scientific theory? Is relativity compatible with the vision of the mystics? Is quantum theory? Or does Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle and the stochastic nature of quantum data preclude any possible comparison of ‘scientific’ theory with the data perceived in the mystical vision? Does the mystic's vision of the universe as a Thought-construct offer any useful insights into an explanation of the four forces of nature? Does it offer any insights into the nature and behavior of wave/particles? At present, it yet remains to be seen whether or not all these theoretical ‘phenomena’ can be reconciled with the mystic's vision.

One of the difficulties in reconciling observable phenomena and physical laws with the subtle universe described by the mystics is the fact that there are subtle “layers” of reality within the mystic's universe which are not observable or verifiable in any

way—such as the *soul* and *karma*; i.e., invisible causal factors (hidden variables) which are thought to largely determine space-time realities, but which themselves are unobservable, and therefore undemonstrable, and unverifiable. The empirical ‘laws’ of physics bear no recognizable relationship to the ‘laws’ of psychology—if there are any such laws; why then should the laws of physics bear any relationship to the laws of *Spirit*, which is a yet subtler holarchic level? Of course, they are all interrelated; the physical is nested in the mental, and the mental is nested in the Spiritual. The Spiritual world is the greater holon in which these other levels reside. So, it would seem that, ultimately, both the psychic (mentally perceived) and the physical (sensually perceived) worlds must be directly relatable to and consistent with the data obtained in the Spiritual vision.

Ultimately, science and gnosis *must* coincide in an, eventually formulated, *complete* model of reality! But empirical science can never succeed in formulating a ‘complete’ model of reality until it takes into account the mental and spiritual aspects of reality as a whole. Even if it comes up with a ‘Theory of Everything’, as it frequently does, it means by that term ‘a Theory of Everything Phenomenal’. And even if that Theory were to be empirically demonstrated to be accurate and consistent, it would then have to recognize that only a small part of the larger reality had been explained, and that an explanation must now be found for the existence of those phenomena and noumena existing in the higher (subtler) levels of psychic (mental) and Spiritual reality. For, the perceivable, phenomenal, universe is simply an epiphenomenon of the two subtler realms. Each is related to the other, holarchically, and none may be regarded as an isolated field of enquiry.

It’s a top-down universe, each level dependent on its holarchic precedent; and, ideally, knowledge of this universe must also be top-down. Ideally, we must first know the Source, the Cause; then the products, the effects, will become correctly known and understood. It is true, as Mr. Wilber points out, that the knowledge of the Source takes place, not on the sensual or mental levels, but on the spiritual level; and not with physical or psychic vision, but with spiritual vision. But there must be a means to correlate (on the mental level) the data obtained in these apparently disparate realms. If we start at the bottom, with the empirical data of the phenomenal universe, and attempt to infer from it the higher holons of reality, the mental and the spiritual, we have no consistent and reliable clues by which to infer those higher realities. In other words, when we ignore or deny the Source, as many scientific materialists and materialistic scientists presently do, it is little wonder that the theories of empirical science often go so incredibly far astray of the truth of reality as perceived in the Spiritual vision. Our understanding of the

manifest, phenomenal universe requires a context; and that context can only be found at the summit of the holarchic reality; i.e., in the Spiritual vision. With that as the starting point, one may then comprehend the phenomenal reality; without it, one is left with no contextual framework at all. And that epitomizes the state of confusion and alienation prevalent in the exclusively empirical view of the world currently embraced by contemporary science.

However, in the past and in the present, Spiritual knowledge—*direct* Spiritual knowledge—has been, and it appears that it will continue indefinitely to remain, a kind of knowledge obtained by the very, very few. It is no doubt the ‘highest’ knowledge possible, providing a direct subjective apperception of the summit of the holarchy of knowledge, and doubtless represents the eventual summit of human evolution; but the *universal* human apperception of the spiritual reality is a culmination that remains a long, long way off. For now, the revelation of that direct unitive knowledge occurs only in isolated instances, and the recipients of that knowledge are nearly as culturally isolated as was Jesus and Philo Judaeus two thousand years ago; though there is possibly some increase in the *philosophical* (mental) interest in mysticism in today’s world.

As I stated earlier, there are some areas in which Mr. Wilber and I differ slightly. It is evident that his concern over the current emphasis in our society on the validity of empirical (scientific) knowledge to the complete exclusion of other areas of knowledge, and the failure of the representatives of empirical knowledge to acknowledge the validity of the transcendent knowledge of the mystics, is a concern that we both share. However, one of the differences between our views that comes to mind involves Mr. Wilber’s notion that there is a tried and true ‘scientific’ methodology for producing mystical experience, or ‘the vision of God’; namely, the practice of meditation or contemplation. In several of his books, Mr. Wilber makes the pertinent point that, just as an empirical scientist must perform an experiment in accordance with the scientific “injunction” to abide by the prescribed conditions of the experiment, so must a spiritual experimenter conform to the injunction setting out the conditions of the spiritual experiment, namely, the practice of meditation or contemplation, in order to obtain the experiential results; i.e., spiritual vision.

This analogy to scientific empirical experimentation provides a great corrective to those who might say, ‘I have not experienced spiritual vision’; whereupon one may counter, ‘Well, have you conformed to the conditions prescribed for obtaining spiritual vision? Have you practiced meditation?’ And if they cannot answer,

‘Yes’ to that question, then they simply have not fulfilled the conditions necessary for obtaining the desired results. This is all well and good. But I would like to suggest that the acquisition of spiritual knowledge through spiritual vision is not *entirely* analogous to the acquisition of empirical knowledge; and I would like to point out, in the interest of clarification, the ways in which they are different, so as to alleviate any misunderstandings resulting from the omission of this information.

What is wrong with the logic of the following statement? ‘All those who have experienced the unitive vision have done so while in a state of meditative or contemplative awareness; therefore, if you practice meditation or contemplation, you will experience the unitive vision.’? It should be clear to everyone that the concluding portion of this statement is a *non sequitur*. It just does not follow logically. It seems evident to me that if spiritual knowledge were simply a matter of fulfilling the conditions necessary for its occurrence, such as establishing a disciplined program of meditation, the world would already be filled with enlightened souls. But it is not simply a matter of fulfilling conditions, comparable to the requirement for obtaining empirical results. I do indeed wish it were true, Mr. Wilber; but it is not—and that’s been the fly in the ointment all along. Is spiritual knowledge really an objective obtainable, and “perfectly repeatable”, by anyone simply by setting up the prescribed conditions? Because I have ‘known’ God, the absolute Ground of all reality, does that mean that, by following my ‘methodology’ you also will come to know God? In other words, can anyone obtain the same resulting spiritual knowledge as another simply by following certain conditional injunctions, or is the acquisition of spiritual knowledge much more dependent upon a ‘Higher Will’ than upon our own determined will and actions?

Einstein knew the mathematical proof of the constancy of the speed of light, and the variability of the measurement of time relative to an observer; but can you also know what he knew? And the answer, it seems to me, is “Only if, by the grace of God, you have the same innate inclination and the same degree of mathematical training to investigate these matters, *and* you follow the necessary injunctions for obtaining that knowledge. Otherwise, you must simply take it on faith that the constancy of the speed of light is known.” What about Beethoven? He knew how to create extraordinary music; does that mean that you also know how to do that? Same answer: ‘Only if, by the grace of God, you have the same innate inclination and the same degree of musical training, *and* you follow the necessary injunctions for obtaining that knowledge.’ Darwin knew that various species were related, but evolved differently through the process of natural selection; but can you also

discover previously unknown laws of nature? Only if, by the grace of God, you have the same innate inclination and the same degree of scientific training, *and* you follow the necessary injunctions for obtaining that knowledge. This same line of reasoning may be applied to Jesus, the Buddha, Plotinus, and all other seers of the ‘spiritual’ reality. You may know what they knew only if you have the same innate inclination and the same degree of spiritual training, *and* you follow the necessary injunctions for obtaining that knowledge, *and* it is God’s will.

It should be clear to everyone that we are not all equally capable of ‘knowing’ what has been known by uniquely extraordinary beings. Everything depends on our innate inclination and our specialized training, and of course the grace of God. By “innate inclination” I mean the soul-driven proclivities and talents constituting the karmic tendencies possessed by each soul. These ‘innate inclinations’ are wholly dependent upon the evolutionary development of our souls; which are, in turn, dependent upon, not only our own wills, but the grace of God. And so, we must acknowledge that the subtle spiritual knowledge that has been obtained by a few extraordinary men and women is not necessarily available to everyone; there must be a congruence of inclination, training, and God’s grace, along with the practice of meditation or contemplation. The assertion by many spiritual teachers that the realization of God, the knowledge of the Source and Goal of all existence, is available to everyone simply by following certain precepts and injunctions, is not at all an accurate assessment. One’s soul, which is itself a product of God’s grace, must contain an innate inclination to the acquisition of such knowledge, must follow a regimen of introspection, and, by the grace of God, be placed in the most timely and appropriate cosmic circumstances to receive such knowledge. Then, and only then, will it be able to ‘know’ God. Is God-realization available to everyone? Sorry, no. I think that, not only spiritual knowledge, but each kind of knowledge—sensory, mental, or spiritual—is available only to those whom God has made distinctly fit for it; it is misleadingly inaccurate to say that such knowledge is available to everyone.

The injunctions given by Jesus, “Seek and ye shall find,” “Knock, and the door shall be opened to you”, has inspired many followers to seek and to knock, and yet we must wonder, how many of those millions of followers were enlightened with the unitive vision of God after seeking and knocking? I can think of only a handful of Christians who seem to have obtained this vision over the past twenty centuries. The injunctions given by the Buddha, “Meditation brings wisdom; therefore, choose the path of wisdom”, has drawn many to meditation; and some have become illumined—but only a small percent. My point is that there is no

guaranteed means or methodology for obtaining the unitive vision. It seems to me to depend on many factors, not all of which are within the purview of one's own will.

It would certainly be wonderful if one could truthfully and confidently say 'Do this, and you will experience the unitive vision', but in spiritual matters there is no direct causal relationship between voluntary acts and revelation such as there is between empirical injunctions, spelling out the conditions of the experiment, and the produced results. 'Do this, and that will result' is sound and dependable advice when we are advising "release the ball, and you will see that it falls to earth"; but not necessarily as truthfully predictive when we are advising "practice meditation, and you will become enlightened". If it was an easily reproducible experience, it is likely that enlightenment would have been widely accepted as a readily obtainable and commonly repeatable experience by now—which is certainly not the case.

It is no doubt true that one living in an environment conducive to meditation has an advantage over one who is immersed in a turbulent and disturbing environment, but we must not leap to the conclusion that all the monks in the temple, monastery or ashram are therefore enlightened. The one thing we can say for certain is that they are exposing themselves to the lifestyle and practices conducive to the unitive vision. It is not because the Buddha sat down under a Bo tree to meditate that he became enlightened; it is not because Jesus went alone into the wilderness to pray and contemplate God that he became illumined; it is not because John of the Cross gave himself to introspection and prayer within his Toledo cell that he was united with God. All of these mystical seers found themselves drawn to conditions that were amenable to that experience, but the underlying Cause was the grace of the all-governing Spirit, which called each soul from within to evolve toward the egoless reception of that non-dual revelation; in other words, it was God's singular grace which was the ultimate causative factor in that revelation. I am aware that this is an unpopular stance; but experience has taught me that the revelation of the unitive vision cannot be reduced to a causal act initiated by the individual.

Indeed, we need to ask ourselves, "Who is this 'I' who thinks it can bring about the realization of the transcendent God by its own efforts?" It is well known that only when this false and limited 'I' vanishes is the revelation of God at all possible! And by whose grace do you suppose the death of that false 'I' is accomplished? Whose love wells up in the soul and draws it to that immolation? And whose 'I' is revealed in the unitive vision as the Ground and essence of all 'I's? If you think

you can bring this about by your own efforts, go right ahead. As Saint Nanak has said, eventually, ‘suffering will teach you wisdom’.

The ‘causes’ of grace cannot be discussed, of course; because only the One is privy to the factors that go into its bestowal. However, I am of the opinion, based on my visionary experience, that, in His universe, “all things move together of one accord”, and that many elements must come together in the production of the revelation of the soul’s higher Identity. There is a coordinated unfoldment in the manifested world of one’s mental, emotional, and karmic conditions along with the conditions of the physical environment, and the positions of the planets in the cosmic environment—all under the watchful and governing eye of the Spirit—to bring about that unitive vision. In other words, man purposes, but God disposes. None may deliberately, willfully transcend and supercede His unerring Will. When it is that soul’s time for enlightenment, he will be drawn from within to seek it; he will be drawn to the conducive location; he will be drawn into spiritual communion, and he will be illumined in his soul by the Light of the one Spirit.

Innumerable saints and seers have declared their utter dependence upon God’s grace in obtaining spiritual vision; here are just a couple: Saint Nanak, the *Adi* (original) *Guru* of the Sikh tradition (1469-1539 C.E.), who said, “By God’s grace alone may God be grasped. All else is false, all else is vanity.” In one of his songs, addressing God, he reiterates this conviction:

He whom Thou makest to know Thee, he knows Thee;
And his mouth shall forever be full of thy praises.
... Liberation and bondage depends upon Thy will;
There is no one to gainsay it.
Should a fool wish to, suffering will teach him wisdom. ¹

Another seer, named Dadu (1544-1603 C.E.), was also eloquently unambiguous in declaring this truth:

Omniscient God, it is by Thy grace alone that I have been
blessed with vision of Thee.
Thou knowest all; what can I say? ²

These examples could be multiplied extensively, and I would add my own declaration to the list. However, I think one could compile a much longer list of those who, having practiced meditation for many years, did *not* experience an

enlightening revelation, who, after their best efforts, did *not* obtain the unitive vision. So, I feel that the suggestion that enlightenment follows a cause-effect sequence that anyone may experientially prove to his or her own satisfaction simply by the practice of meditation is a useful tool for encouraging the search for enlightenment (which is no doubt its function), and it may indeed prove fruitful in specific instances. But it is also unrealistic and unreliable as an unqualified injunctive rule—unless, of course, we leave the time frame open-ended. I know of one spiritual teacher who used to tell his followers that, if they continued to practice meditation, they would be enlightened in eight, ten, or twelve lifetimes, depending on their effort. Looked at from that time frame, the guarantee appears much more plausible. The fact is, we are all, in our spiritual essence, identical with the one Spirit, the transcendent Lord of the universe; and one day all, by the grace of God, must come to know it. On that you may rely. Meanwhile, we remain as consciously aware of His presence within us as we are able and strive to become ever nearer to the clear realization of that one indivisible Self with every breath.

NOTES:

1. Singh, Trilochan, et all. [eds.], *Selections From The Sacred Writings Of The Sikhs*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1960; *Rag Asa*, pp. 57, 42 (or see Abhayananda, S., *History of Mysticism*, London, Watkins, 2002; pp. 335-344).
2. Orr, W.G., *A Sixteenth Century Indian Mystic*, London, Lutterworth Press, 1947; p. 142 (or see Abhayananda, S., *History of Mysticism*, London, Watkins, 2002; pp. 345-356).

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3. The Celestial Dynamics of Grace ¹ (from *The Supreme Self*, 1984, minus the astrological charts)

Nearly ten years had passed since my experience of enlightenment in the Santa Cruz mountains, when I began to be interested in the peculiar claims of astrology and came to have an understanding of the “celestial dynamics,” not only of my own personal characteristics, but of all the ordinary and extraordinary day-to-day transient conditions of the mind, the body, and the soul. There were, no doubt, some “celestial influences” accompanying that dawning interest in astrological correspondences, but I was unaware of them; all I knew was that, at this time, I had become fascinated with the clearly meaningful connections between my own natal planetary positions and my personal characteristics and fluctuating mental states; and as I eagerly consumed what literature I found on the subject, I became more and more convinced of the validity of the astrological principle of correspondence between the planetary positions and the varying conditions of my psyche.

According to the principles of astrology, one can discover the secrets of a soul’s unique characteristics (the psychology of a personality) by drawing a map of the heavens as it appeared at the exact moment and place of birth, which serves as a sort of blueprint of that particular soul. But how, when, and in what sequence the events of the person’s adventure on earth will take place is told in the *progressions* of the planets (one day in the ephemeris represents one year in the life), and by the daily *transits* (actual transitory positions) of the Sun, moon and planets as they pass through and relate to the natal map.

All of the planets move (transit) through the twelve signs of the zodiac which comprise the 360° of the ecliptic; some slowly, some more rapidly. The Sun moves approximately one degree per day, and the moon one degree approximately every two hours. The outer planets take weeks or months to move through a degree. But always the overall architecture of this “atom” which we call the solar system is altering its design moment by moment. And we, who are within the confines of this “atom” are continually experiencing the changes in our own energy-patterns according to, and corresponding with, the changes in the angles from which the various planets and stars relate to us.

This implies, of course, that *everything* that happens to us in our lives will be accompanied by a planetary arrangement, which, in its relationship to the positions of the planets at the moment of our birth, will symbolize that event. One day, it

occurred to me that, if these principles were true, there would have to have been a configuration in the progressed and transiting positions of the planets on the night of my “mystical experience” that was significantly extraordinary. In other words, that Divine experience which we refer to as “*grace*” must also have been signified in the planetary patterns in effect for me on that very night.

This was a mind-boggling concept that was to stand many of my most cherished presumptions on their heads. In order to explain why this should be so, let me take a moment to describe some of those presumptions regarding that mysterious thing called “*grace*,” which is, from the standpoint of its recipient, a new and radical change in consciousness, and, subsequently, in the personality, which arises seemingly from out of nowhere:

From the moment my soul first awakened with “spiritual” understanding, and the love and desire for God first entered my heart, I had attributed that awakening to God’s grace. And there was no question in my mind that my later, “mystical,” experience was the gift of grace, for there was absolutely no denying the fact that this experience had been *given* to me. I had not earned it; I had practiced no technique, no method; by no means could I be said to have produced it. There was no other word to describe this gift other than “*grace*.”

Traditionally, grace—the grace of God—was thought of as the freely-given intercession of God to a humbled soul, lifting it momentarily to mergence in the universal Consciousness. In this experience, the false, but insistent, illusion of a separate soul-identity, or ego, is dissolved, and the Divine Intelligence, which is the infinite and eternal Self of all, is revealed. How could the illusory, individual self imagine that it had accomplished this feat? Let those who think they can accomplish it do so. When the Self is realized, that separate self is no longer even there! The eternal Self appears only at its demise. And it has not the ability to slay itself; it is only the divine revelation of God that, in an instant, dissolves that tenacious illusory ego. It is grace.

Listen to what that enlightened 15th-century monk, Thomas á Kempis, had to say about grace:

“When spiritual comfort is sent to you of God, take it meekly and give thanks humbly for it. But know for certain that it is of the great goodness of God that it is sent to you, and not of your deserving. And see that you are not lifted up therefore unto pride, nor that you joy much thereof, nor

presume vainly therein, but rather that you be the more meek for so noble a gift, and the more watchful and fearful in all your works; for that time will pass away, and the time of temptation will shortly follow after. When comfort is withdrawn, despair not therefore, but meekly and patiently await the visitation of God, for He is able and of sufficient power to give you more grace and more spiritual comfort than you had first. Such alteration of grace is no new thing, and no strange thing to those who have had experience in the way of God; for in all great saints and in all lovers of God similar alteration has often been found.

“... If almighty God has done thus with holy saints, it is not for us, weak and feeble persons, to despair, though we sometimes have fervor of spirit, and are sometimes left cold and void of devotion. *The Spirit comes and goes according to His pleasure*, and therefore Job said: ‘Lord, Thou graciously visitest Thy lover in the morning, that is to say, in the time of comfort; and suddenly Thou provest him in withdrawing such comforts from him.’

“...He who knows the comforts that come through the gift of grace and knows also how sharp and painful the absenting of grace is, shall not dare think that any goodness comes of himself; but he shall openly confess that of himself he is very poor and naked of all virtue.”²

What Thomas said conformed to my own experience. The fervor of devotion was not always the same; it came and went, apparently according to its own pleasure. Likewise, the clarity of understanding was sometimes absent, and at other times inspiration seemed to flood my mind with the wisdom of God. One day I might be filled with love and fervor; another day I might be dry or lethargic, or physically energetic, or contemplative. One day I might be bubbling with creative energy; another day I would be dry as a bone. There was no telling what kind of inner state each day would bring.

The experience of union, or Unity, had come to me only once. Why on that day, at that time? I could only explain it, as Thomas á Kempis did, as God’s inexplicable grace. But now I was beginning to understand something of the celestial dynamics of grace, i.e., the principles of astrological correspondence. And so I drew up a chart for that night of November 18, 1966.

What a revelation it was when I beheld that chart! The correspondence was undeniable. Here before my eyes was clear and unequivocal proof of the “science” of astral correspondences. Any impartial astrologer viewing the progressions and transits to my natal chart which occurred on that evening would have to acknowledge that this was indeed a night of destiny, an undeniably magical night of mystical vision, a once-in-a-lifetime night of incredible potential for the meeting with God. The extraordinary emphasis on the planetary position of Neptune (known as the planet of mystical experience) at that particular time is eloquently conclusive.

If—as many people think—there is really no correlation between the planets and the human psyche, then what an extraordinarily grand coincidence it was, what a marvelous accident of nature, that at the same moment that I was experiencing the Godhead, the planets were proclaiming it in the heavens! I think any reasonable person with even a little astrological acumen, on viewing the “influences” in effect for me that night, would have to acknowledge that the significant planetary picture at the time of my “enlightenment experience” does, in fact, seem to provide evidence of the validity of the contents of that experience, confirming that all things do indeed “move together of one accord,” that nothing happens that is not ordained to happen, that the universe is one coordinated Whole. (*For details on the Astrological conditions existing at the time of my “Enlightenment,” see the Appendix at the back of The Supreme Self, or you can view the charts at “The Celestial Dynamics of Grace” on my companion website at: www.theastrologersvision.weebly.com.*)

But, along with the excitement of discovery and validation which I felt on viewing this chart, there was a nagging question that left me baffled and confused: If this “mystical experience” was described in the heavens since the beginning of time, and therefore entirely predestined, where was “grace”? Where was the freely-given gift of God that I had experienced as occurring at just that moment? If everything was strictly predetermined, where was grace and free will and the possibility of spiritual endeavor?

Where was choice or merit or virtue? Where was blame or culpability? And where was the hope or possibility of “spiritual experience” for those in whose astrological forecast the prerequisite planetary conditions were *not* present? If God’s universe is merely the mechanistic unfolding of an undeviating script, then are we all merely mechanical pawns, and our trials and triumphs, our perseverings

and defeats, merely dramatic plot-twists in a story that's already written, typeset and published?

It is important to emphasize at this time that the planets, in themselves, do not have the power to *cause* either good or ill-fortune, though many (including myself) habitually speak of “planetary influences” as though they were *independent causes* determining our fate. In ancient times, of course, as planetary configurations were seen to correspond to definite kinds of psychological and behavioral effects, the naïve supposed that planets were therefore independent forces, responsible for the destiny of man. Each planet was fitted out with its own individual personality and was assumed to have independent power to affect events on earth. This was the basis for the myths of the “gods.”

The great Roman mystic, Plotinus, writing in the 3rd century C.E. on the subject of *Are The Stars Causes?* noted that a belief in the independent power of the planets is “tenable only by minds ignorant of the [true] nature of a Universe which has a ruling Principle and a First Cause operative downward through every member.”³ He explained:

“Each [planetary] entity takes its origin from one Principle and, therefore, while executing its own function, works in with every other member of that All. ... And there is nothing undesigned, nothing of chance, in all the process: all is one scheme of differentiation, starting from the First Cause and working itself out in a continuous progression of effects.”⁴

This perfectly unfolding progression of effects from the one all-ruling Cause is clearly seen by all who have been graced with “the vision of God.” It is that “vision” which is the experiential basis for the assertion that “all things move together of one accord”; that “assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.” Still, the question of *how* the transiting “planetary influences” operate, i.e., by what process Neptune or any other planet transmits to individual souls its effects, is a legitimate one. And the matter of how *progressions* operate (which are not even present-time events, but “symbols” of planetary events already past) is even more perplexing. These questions cannot be answered by present-day knowledge, but many astrologers guess that something like the following is the case:

As the planets of the solar system change their angles to one another and thus rearrange the structural design of the entire system and its relationship to the design at one's nativity, there is a corresponding change in the pattern of conscious energy (*Shakti*) which makes up our psychic and phenomenal reality. The energy-pattern (produced by the angular positions of the Sun, Moon and planets), which exists at the time of an individual's birth, corresponds to the conscious energy-pattern, or aggregation of qualities, of that individual soul. And the subsequent alterations of the planetary positions after that moment spell out in decipherable terms his or her destiny.

It seems to me, however, that the search for a *cause-effect* relationship between the transits and progressions of planets and the lives of individual souls on earth is indicative of humanity's long-standing mistaken view of reality. Plotinus saw in the 2nd century what is true eternally—that there is *one* Cause, and all else is Its effects. The planets do not focus beneficent or malevolent rays or forces in our direction; they do not put forth any fields of influence that impinge on us at all. In short, they are not causes at all, but merely *signs* of the activity of the one Cause, which is God, revealed to those who can read them.

I believe it is very important to understand that, although the planets *signal* psychic and physical events experienced on earth, they are not themselves responsible; they are not the *cause* but are only coincident effects synchronous with the effects perceived upon earthly life. In short, the “influences” of the planets are really the influences of the unbroken Whole, manifesting locally as specific patterns of relationships. The planets do not determine our fate; they merely reveal it. Our lives are determined by the One in whom the planets move. This is a view consistent with the view of Plotinus, and I believe it will be consistent with the enlightened understanding of the future.

The evolution of the soul occurs over many lifetimes, with its summit being the full openness to self-surrender in the Love of God, and the subsequent realization of its supreme Identity. And because the evolution of the universe reflects the evolution of each soul, the stellar and planetary positions, which signal that soul's enlightenment, will coincide perfectly with that moment in the soul's evolutionary summit. And the question of whether it is the soul's evolutionary struggle or the planetary alignments, which brings about enlightenment must be answered, “Neither.” They are coordinated events in the unfolding of God's cosmic drama; both events are simultaneous effects of the one Cause, occurring in Himself in the

ordered unfoldment of His will. All is one coordinated whole, and all that occurs within it is a manifestation of His grace.

The complexity of such a universe—a universe in which the destiny of each succeeding manifestation of a soul on earth is in synchronization with the ongoing motions of planetary bodies—is indeed beyond our present ability to conceive or visualize. Nonetheless, we must acknowledge that it is impossible to separate the birth of any individual from the cosmic conditions in which it occurs. For the universe is an integral Whole, and every event in it is in interlocking agreement with every other; not even the tiniest, most seemingly insignificant, event may be considered as an isolated phenomenon.

Within this Whole, where “all things move together of one accord,” the division of small-scale events into categories of *cause* and *effect* is imaginary and has no real meaning. For it is the Lord, God, *Shiva*, Self—call Him what you will—who, by means of His Power of Will (*Shakti*), is the sole Cause of the entire manifested array of the cosmos and therefore of every single event which takes place within it. This truth is seen clearly and unmistakably in the unitive experience of the mystic.

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NOTES:

1. This article is a compilation of excerpts from my book, *The Supreme Self*, London, O Books, 2005.
2. Abhayananda, Swami., *Thomas á Kempis: On The Love of God*, Olympia, Wash., Atma Books, 1992; pp. 74-75, 78
3. Plotinus, *Enneads*, II:3:6
4. *Ibid.*, II:3:7

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4. The Gift of Spiritual Vision (4-2-2013; rev. 7-6-2017)

For the *bhakta*, the soul in the throes of love for God, there arises a love-longing for the union with God. And prior to the dawning of that unitive experience, there is much singing and prayers, and copious tears. But then, at the inception of the experience of revelation, there is an end to the emotion, and the soul falls into a calm that is also intensely awake. The pupils of her eyes become extraordinarily open wide, and her breathing slows and subsides to a very shallow rise and fall, as though it were approaching the balance point, where breathing would be entirely stilled. The relationship of soul to God is nearly vanished, and there is only the fine awareness focused upon its own incredible clarity, its own being; and then the prayer that bursts forth from the finally naked and surrendered soul: “O God, let me be one with Thee—not that I might glory in Thy love, but that I might speak out in Thy praise and to Thy glory for the benefit of all Thy children”. And then comes the sudden awakening, as though from a dream, and this soul suddenly sees with the eyes of the eternal One, who is the Self it has always been—the Self *you* have always been.

You, who have been crying for His embrace; you, who have been awaiting the arrival of the King; you, *yourself*, are the only Existence, the Lord, the Father; and all along you have been living in an illusory separation from yourself, in a dream-world of your own making. But now, there are no longer two. *Even now, I speak the word, ‘Thou’, and create duality.* There is no one else, and never had been; you are the omnipresent Mind—you! The personification you had adopted was but a fantasy; and now you see the truth. You live eternally, showering forth this huge universal display. You are the life in every creature: *I am the pulse of the turtle; I am the clanging bells of joy. I bring the dust of blindness; I am the fire of song. I am in the clouds and in the gritty soil; in pools of clear water my image is found. ...I have but breathed, and everything is rearranged and set in order once again. A million worlds begin and end in every breath, and in this breathing, all things are sustained.*

The prayer that precipitated this vision was the prayer of a soul, still caught in the illusion of a separate identity; yet the desire to praise God was God’s desire speaking through the soul, and in this life, she has no other purpose but to honor that prayerful desire. It permeates this soul, and constitutes her task in this life, her only joy. It may be that she was given no mandate from God to teach; and it was she who asked to be united with Him in order that she might speak out truly in His

praise and to His glory. And yet, that desire sprang from the deepest place in that soul, a soul which is itself fountained forth from God. And so that desire was truly His desire in her. His granting of that desire for intimacy constituted His mandate. When she looks at the lives and missions of others before her, like the Egyptian author of the Hermetic teachings, like the Buddha, Jesus, Plotinus, Eckhart, etc., she associates strongly with the sense of mission each possessed, having been graciously lifted up to intimacy with God, and filled with the desire to praise Him. What a singular grace, and what responsibility it confers! Yet, despite the gift of this advantageous vision, all who received it were mere mortals, with the limitations that implies. All had to endure the earthly life of bodily provision, sickness and death; and all had to endure the doubt and malevolence of the community of other men and women. Yet still they communicated their vision as best they could. Their lifelong desire to see and to give expression to the truth of God is God's enduring gift to us, His wondrous, thrillingly beautiful, gift of overwhelming joy to all of us.

And once the larger, subtler, eternal reality is known, the soul, returned to awareness of this world, can scarcely see the phenomenal reality in the same way as before. During the visionary experience of the Eternal, she is identical with the Eternal, and blissfully content to remain in that state. However, that state wanes and gives way to the return in consciousness to this temporal and phenomenal reality. This is truly an unwelcome eviction. Having known the bliss of her all-pervading Self, she is at first greatly shocked and dismayed at finding herself back in this little world of separable images in time and space. But after her initial dismay, she reflects on her current state, and quickly realizes that she is still the eternal Self, and that the world to which she has returned consists solely of the bright Energy breathed forth from her Divinely transcendent Self. She recognizes that now she is in a dream-movie, but it is the dream-movie of God, who is indeed her very Self; and even this body in which she moves about is woven of that Divine fabric.

She realizes that, even in this projected image which God puts forth, she remains enveloped in His blissful Being, and realizes that she could never be anything but safe at home in Him. That is the great gift of Spiritual vision: that now she sees this transient world of images as suffused with ethereal light and splayed with dazzling beauty. Joyful contentment fills the air she breathes, and adoration fills her heart. This is the translation of divine vision into the world of phenomenal awareness. This is the carryover from the transcendent vision to the sensory vision here on earth.

She carries over from that higher realm no intellectual understanding of how a photon operates as both a particle and a wave, or how the force of gravity interacts with the moving earth. Let physicists puzzle over these dusty details; she is content to see her beauteous God in evidence all about her and within her. To abandon that untold treasure of joy to pick and peck amidst the crumbs of reason's paltry scrapings would be but the conduct of a fool. You can have it, you mathematicians and quantum mechanicians! You biochemists and cosmo-theoreticians! It's all been settled and displayed to her utmost satisfaction: Beauty beauty beauty everywhere, and the wine of intoxicating nectar in her cup! What needs she more?

And yet, having seen so clearly that all the beings who exist on earth are truly embodiments of the one Divine Self, the desire to share this wondrous knowledge remains an insistent urge deep within her soul. But, also, she is aware that each soul follows an evolutionary path unique to itself and is able to comprehend the omnipresence of God only in the proper time, and only by the gracious gift of God. And so, her words have relevance now, and in the future, only to those whose eyes are already opened, to those on whom God's grace has already shone. Then rejoice with her, all ye fortunate souls! And be merciful to those whose temporary blindness is also His gift. He will lift that blindness in His time, and release all from the darkness in which they now live. He will open to their eyes, as He did to hers, the light and warmth, the wonder and delight, the beauty and the joy, of His immeasurable life-giving Love. Praise God!

* * *

5. All Glory To God (8-16-2015)

Some men are born to find a mate and raise families of children; I was born to write songs in praise of God. Isn't that strange? I don't know why I was made to be so unusual a person. Even as a child, I knew that I was to be a writer, though I didn't know what I would write. Then, after my twenty-eighth birthday, a prayer to God, which He implanted within me, burst from my heart: "Lord, let me be one with Thee, not that I might glory in Thy love, but that I might speak out in Thy praise and to Thy glory for the benefit of all Thy children." The Lord immediately granted my prayer, allowing me to know my oneness with Him, and since that time I have been an instrument of His service. The songs in praise of God come forth, even without bidding. They write themselves, as I watch the pen move. And nothing could please me more than this perfect fulfillment of my birth and my soul's prayer.

Though many would find my life narrow and uninteresting, I'm so grateful that the Lord has blessed me in this way and allowed me to sing His praise for the benefit of all His children—though to me, truly, it seems that I merely leave a space for Him to produce these works through me, and He does the rest. I have seen, in fact, that He is the doer of everything. To Him, therefore, let us give all the glory now and forever.

* * *

6. Amazing Grace (6-30-2015)

I recently watched with millions of other viewers as President Barack Obama sang “Amazing Grace” on nationwide TV while attending the funeral of a friend and colleague. It is a well-known song that was written by John Newton, an English Christian clergyman, in 1773, and has been popular in American Churches and culture ever since. The popularity of this song over the years is due to the fact that it is a song to which everyone can relate, for we have all known the merciful touch of God in our lives. God’s Grace is not limited to members of any single sectarian orientation; it is universal and touches every human being on earth.

God comes into our lives of His own accord and wakens us to His ever-presence. For each of us, it is a unique experience, an experience that leaves its lasting imprint on our souls, providing inspiration for courage in our lives and solace in our troubles by reminding us of God’s mercy and of our true home in His heart. Every instance of God’s Grace is a great and valuable gift to the soul who receives it, but I would ask you to consider the special merits of a very special Grace with which only a relatively few fortunate souls are familiar, and yet which I feel is uncommonly worthy to be regarded as *amazing*:

It is the gracious revelation of one’s divine Identity, the soul’s sudden realization that it is in God, is made of God, and is nothing else but God. It is this revelatory Grace which was visited on Heraclitus and Lao Tze; and it is the experience of that Grace that enlightened the Buddha, causing him to exclaim “I am Father of myself”. It is that interior Grace that revealed to the Upanishadic *rishis* the truth that “Thou art That!” And it is the experience of that Grace that illumined Jesus when he was baptized by the Spirit in the river Jordan, leading him to declare, “I and the Father are one!” It is the Grace that awakened Plotinus to the unitive vision of God, and also revealed to Meister Eckhart his oneness with God; it was also that “amazing” Grace that revealed to the Sufi mystic, Ibn Arabi, his own eternal Self; and there are those of us who experience this very special Grace even in these present days.

Here, please listen for yourself to the words of these various representatives of diverse religious and philosophical traditions as they tell of their own experience of that ‘amazing Grace’:

1. **VEDANTA/HINDUISM:** *Here are some words about that Divine revelation from various authors of the **Upanishads** (ca. 1200 B.C.E.):*

“He cannot be seen by the eye, and words cannot reveal Him. He cannot be reached by the senses, or by austerity or sacred actions. By the grace of wisdom and purity of mind, He can be seen indivisible in the silence of contemplation.” ¹

“What cannot be thought with the mind, but That whereby the mind thinks: know That alone to be Brahman. ... It is not what is thought that we should wish to know; we should know the thinker. ‘He is my Self!’ This one should know. ‘He is my Self!’ This one should know.” ²

“When a sage sees this great Unity, and realizes that his Self has become all beings, what delusion and what sorrow could ever approach him?” ³

“When awake to the vision of one’s own Self, when a man in truth can say: ‘I am He,’ what desires could lead him to grieve in fever for the body? ... When a man sees the *Atman*, his own Self, the one God, the Lord of what was and of what shall be, then he fears no more.” ⁴

“When a man has seen the truth of the Spirit, he is one with Him; the aim of his life is fulfilled, and he is ever beyond sorrow. ... When a man knows God, he is free; his sorrows have an end, and birth and death are no more. When in inner union he is beyond the world of the body, then the third world, the world of the Spirit, is found, where man possesses all—for he is one with the ONE.” ⁵

(And from the author of the **Bhagavad Gita** (ca. 500 B.C.E.):

“When the mind of the yogi is in peace, focused on the Self within, and beyond all restless desires, then he experiences Unity. His mind becomes still, like the flame of a lamp sheltered from the winds. When the mind rests in the prayerful stillness of yoga, by the grace of the One, he knows the One, and attains fulfillment. Then he knows the joy of Eternity; he sees beyond the intellect and the senses. He becomes the Unmoving, the Eternal.” ⁶

“... In this experience of Unity, the yogi is liberated, delivered from all suffering forever. ...The yogi whose heart is still, whose passions are dissolved, and who is pure of sin, experiences this supreme bliss and knows his oneness with Brahman.” ⁷

2. BUDDHISM: *Here is the way that revelation was spoken of by the Buddha* (ca. 500 B.C.):

“Monks, there is an Unborn, Unoriginated, Unmade and Unconditioned. Were there not the Unborn, Unoriginated, Unmade and Unconditioned, there would be no escape from the born, originated, made and conditioned. Since there is the Unborn, Unoriginated, Unmade and Unconditioned, there *is* escape from the born, originated, made and conditioned.” ⁸

“...There is, O monks, a state where there is neither this world nor any other world, nor is there any Sun or moon. There is neither a coming nor going, nor remaining, nor passing away, nor arising. Without support, without movement, It is the Foundation of everything.” ⁹

And this from a later Chinese Buddhist:

“In learning to be a Buddha, ...man should purify his mind and allow his spirit to penetrate the depths. Thus, he will be able to wander silently within himself during contemplation, and he will see the Origin of all things, obscured by nothing. ...His mind becomes boundless and formless, ... all-illuminating and bright, like moonlight pervading the darkness. During that absolute moment, the mind experiences illumination without darkness, clarity without stain. It becomes what it really is, absolutely tranquil, absolutely illuminating. Though this all-pervading Mind is tranquil, the world of cause and effect does not cease; though It illumines the world, the world is but Its reflection. It is pure Light and perfect Quiescence, which continues through endless time. It is motionless, and free from all activity; It is silent, and self-aware. ...That brilliant Light permeates every corner of the world. It is This we should become aware of and know.” ¹⁰

3. **CHRISTIANITY:** *Here are some words attributed to Jesus*
(ca. 30 C.E.) regarding the realization of his unity with God:

“Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.” ¹¹

“Jesus said, ‘I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest. Everything came forth from me, and everything returns to me. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift a stone, and you will find me there.’” ¹²

Meister Eckhart (1260-1328), a Christian prelate, said this about his own unitive experience:

“As the soul becomes more pure and bare and poor, and possesses less of created things, and is emptied of all things that are not God, it receives God more purely, and is more completely in Him; and it truly becomes one with God, and it looks into God and God into it, face to face as it were; two images transformed into one.” ¹³

“I am converted into Him in such a way that He makes me one being with Himself—not a *similar* being. By the living God, it is true that there is no distinction.” ¹⁴

“In this breaking through [of consciousness], I find that God and I are both the same. Then I am what I [always] was; I neither wax nor wane, for I am the motionless Cause that is moving all things.” ¹⁵

“I found in me all things forgotten, my own self forgotten and awareness of Thee, alone, O God. ... I found myself with Thee, being Thy being and speaking the Word and breathing the spirit.” ¹⁶

“Here, one cannot speak of the soul anymore, for she has lost her nature yonder in the oneness of divine essence. There, she is no longer called soul, but is called *immeasurable Being*.¹⁷

“...Some people think that they will see God as if He were standing there and they here. It is not so. God and I, we are one.”¹⁸

“The eye by which I see God is the same as the eye by which God sees me. My eye and God’s eye are one and the same—one in seeing, one in knowing, and one in loving.” ¹⁹

4. **NEOPLATONISM:** *Here’s a little of what the great Egyptian sage, Plotinus (205-270 C.E.), said about the experience of unity:*

“The soul naturally loves God and yearns to be one with Him, just as a noble daughter naturally loves her noble father... And suddenly, [she] is uplifted and sees, without ever knowing how; ... the Supreme has come to her, or rather has revealed Its presence. She has turned away from everything around her and has readied herself, having made herself as beautiful as possible and fashioned herself in likeness with the Divine by those preparations and adornments which come unsought to those who grow ready for the vision. And she has seen that Divine presence suddenly manifesting within herself, for now there is nothing between herself and the Divine. There is now no longer a duality, but a two-in-one; for, so long as that presence continues, all distinction between them is dissolved. The longing of a lover to unite with his [human] beloved is a longing for a mere imitation of that Divine and perfect union.

“...In this state of absorbed contemplation, there is no longer a relationship between a subject and an object; the vision itself is the one continuous Being, so that seeing and seen are one thing; the object and the act of vision have become identical.

“...It is a knowing of the [eternal] Self restored to its original purity. No doubt we should not speak of *seeing*; but we cannot help speaking in terms of duality, such as “the seer” and “the seen,” instead of asserting boldly that it is the attainment of absolute Unity. In this *seeing*, we neither regard an object nor perceive distinctions; for there are not two. The man is altered, no longer himself nor belonging to himself; he is merged with the Supreme, sunken into It, one with It. ...Duality exists only in separation; by our holding ourselves apart from It, the Supreme is set outside of us. This is why the vision cannot be described; we cannot separate the Supreme from ourselves to speak of It, for if we have seen something separate and distinct, we

have fallen short of the Supreme, which can be known only as one with oneself.

“... [In this vision] there are not two; beholder is one with the beheld ... The man who has experienced this mingling with the Supreme must—if he but recalls It —carry the memory of Divinity impressed upon his soul. He is become the Unity, and nothing within him or without can create any diversity. Nor is there any movement now, or passion, or outreaching desire, once this ascent is attained. Reasoning is suspended and all intellection as well, and even—to dare the word—the very *self* is gone. Filled with God, he has in perfect stillness attained isolation, aloneness.

“... This is the life of the gods and of the godlike and blessed among men, ...the passing of the alone to the Alone.”²⁰

5. **ISLAM:** *And here are some words from the Sufi sage, Ibn Arabi (1165-1240), on the unitive experience:*

“When the mystery of the oneness of the soul and the Divine is revealed to you, you will understand that you are no other than God. ... Then you will see all your actions to be His actions and all your attributes to be His attributes and your essence to be His essence. ...Thus, instead of [your own] essence, there is the essence of God and in place of [your own] attributes, there are the attributes of God. He who knows himself sees his whole existence to be the Divine existence but does not experience that any change has taken place in his own nature or qualities. For when you know yourself, your sense of a limited identity vanishes, and you know that you and God are one and the same.”²¹

“...There is no existence save His existence. ...This means that the existence of the beggar is His existence and the existence of the sick is His existence. Now, when this is admitted, it is acknowledged that all existence is His existence; and that the existence of all created things, both accidents and substances, is His existence; and when the secret of one particle of the atoms is clear, the secret of all created things, both

outward and inward, is clear; and you do not see in this world or the next, anything except God.”²²

“On Him alone we depend for everything; our dependence on other things is in reality dependence on Him, for they are nothing but His appearances.”²³

“The eye perceives nothing but Him; only He is to be known. We are His; by Him we exist, and by Him we are governed; and we are, at all times and in all states, in His presence.”²⁴

“Nothing but the Reality is; there is no separate being, no arriving and no being far away. This is seen in true vision; when I experienced it, I saw nothing but Him. When my Beloved appears, with what eye do I see Him? With His eye, not with mine; for no one sees Him except Himself.”²⁵

“It is none other than He who progresses or journeys as you. There is nothing to be known but He; and since He is Being itself, He is therefore also the journeyer. There is no knower but He; so, who are you? Know your true Reality. ... He is the essential Self of all. But He conceals it by [the appearance of] otherness, which is “you.”²⁶

“If you hold to multiplicity, you are with the world; and if you hold to the Unity, you are with the Truth. ...Our names are but names for God; at the same time our individual selves are His shadow. He is at once our identity and not our identity... Consider!”²⁷ In one sense the Reality is creatures; in another sense, It is not. ...Whether you assert that It is undivided or divided, the Self is alone. The manifold [universe] exists and yet it does not exist.”²⁸ “Therefore, know your Self, who you are, what is your identity...”²⁹ “He who knows himself knows his Lord; ...indeed, He is his very identity and reality.”³⁰

“If men knew themselves, they would know God; and if they really knew God, they would be satisfied with Him and would think of Him alone.”³¹

These are the testaments of a few of those to whom God has revealed Himself; perhaps He'll reveal Himself to you as well. It's all about your heart, you know: He's no fool; you must truly come to know that without Him you are nothing, and wholeheartedly offer Him your life and work. If all conditions are just right—if it is your time and place, and He has brought you to His love and Grace, perhaps He'll draw you into His heart and give you a taste of eternal bliss. It's worth a try! Have a talk with Him tonight. ³²

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NOTES:

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6. *Bhagavad Gita*, 6:18-21; Mascaro, Juan, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1962.
7. *Bhagavad Gita*, 6:23-27; *Ibid.*
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20. Plotinus, *Enneads*: VI:7.34, 36; VI: 9.5-11.
21. Landau, Rom, *The Philosophy Of Ibn Arabi*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1959; pp. 83-84.
22. *Ibid.*; p. 83.
23. Austin, R.W.J. (trans.), *Ibn Al-Arabi: The Bezels Of Wisdom*, N.Y., Paulist Press, 1980; p. 98.
24. *Ibid.*; p. 137.

25. *Ibid.*; p. 108.
26. *Ibid.*; p. 136.
27. *Ibid.*; pp. 126-127.
28. *Ibid.*; p. 88.
29. *Ibid.*; p. 126.
30. *Ibid.*; p. 153.
31. Landau, Rom, *The Philosophy Of Ibn Arabi*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1959; p. 79.
32. Anyone interested in reading my own account of the unitive experience, simply go to my website: www.themysticsvision.com, and click on the “Read or Download Books” page. There, you will find a listing for my book, *The Supreme Self*. It is in that book that I describe my own experience of “amazing grace”, and this book, as well as my other books, may be downloaded at no charge in a PDF format. Enjoy.

* * *

7. I May Have Been Wrong (3-20-2017)

I have spent many years telling all of you that the direct knowledge of God was a possibility for everyone. Now, however, after the passage of many years, that possibility has not materialized, and I am beginning to believe I may have been wrong. For so many years I have told everyone that the direct experience of God is available to them—and yet no one has stepped forward to say that they were visited by God in the way I was. Is it possible that I am singularly favored? That I am one in a billion? That, for some unknown reason, God chose to reveal Himself only to me? That, out of all the multitude of human beings on earth, He selected

me and me alone to share His secrets with? There have been others, of course: Heraclitus, Plotinus, Jesus, Meister Eckhart, al-Hallaj, Ibn Arabi, Jnaneshvar, Ramakrishna, and a few others—but they have been only one or two each century! That's a pretty exclusive club!

Why me? Why do you suppose He chose me? I can't help thinking it is because He made this soul with an innate desire and ability to speak to all of you about Him, to sing His praise for your benefit. And so, He showed Himself to me, and inspired me from within to go on speaking of Him. I believed then, and I sincerely believe now that you too can know Him as I have known Him. I believe it is His purpose to illumine every soul. He was generous to me; why wouldn't He be just as generous to you? I don't know why He has not yet revealed Himself to you; I only know that I continue to pray with all my heart that He will reveal to all of you the liberating truth that you and the surrounding universe exist in Him and consist entirely of His all-pervasive Being. In knowing Him as your own eternal Self, you will know eternal freedom and joy, and you will gladly join me in sharing that delight with all your brothers and sisters.

But, clearly, my words describing my experience of God's grace have absolutely no efficacy in bringing about this experience in others. My words only inform others of the existence of such experience and the possibility of its recurrence. When I asked the Lord to make me one with Him so that I might speak out in His praise and to His glory for the benefit of all His children, I had hoped that my words might lead others to Him, but my words only provide evidence for the existence of the nondual mystical experience, and nothing more. I have been unable to stimulate or bring about His grace in myself or in others. Grace is not the result of any human thought, word, or act. God's grace is given of His own free and inscrutable will and to whom He will.

* * *

8. All Things Move Together of One Accord (3-24-2017)

*All things move together of one accord;
Assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.¹*

Sometimes we forget that all that exists in this world is created and controlled by God. All things do indeed move together in accord with His divine Will, and His assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain. This is an unmistakable truth experienced by the mystic, but, I understand that for all others, it is not at all evident, and must remain merely a matter of faith. It is so easy to be misled and to forget the infallibility of the Divine Will, because oftentimes the affairs of the world appear to our limited vision to be in error, or random, and ungoverned by His just and perfect Will. But time will prove all things right. His evolutionary plan and His vision will be vindicated in the end. Therefore, hold this faith above all: that everything is connected to His purpose, and all is ordered and occurs according to His will. Praise God!

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NOTE:

1. from “Song of The Self” by Swami Abhayananda, in *The Supreme Self*, South Fallsburg, N.Y., Atma Books, 1984.

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V. JESUS AND RELIGION

Over two thousand years ago, a young Jewish man named Jesus living in what was then Palestine experienced the Grace of God during a spiritual baptism, and although there was little precedent for the announcement of such an amazing mystical experience, Jesus began speaking of his spiritual realization to all who would listen. He declared that he had known God, and that he had realized that he was in God and God was in him. It had been made clear to him that he and God, whom he referred to as “Father”, were one. But unfortunately, few were capable of grasping the import of Jesus’ revelations; instead they took his words to mean that he, a poor vagabond, was a divinely appointed emissary of God. Some thought that he was the heir of David, the King of the Jews; others thought that he was the chosen one who had been prophesized to come, the long-awaited Messiah. There were a few of his comrades who recognized divinity in him and who honored him and treasured his words; but there were many low-minded men who railed against him and sought to cause him harm. Before long, Jesus was arrested and brought before the authorities who condemned him to death and crucified him in the manner usually reserved for enemies of the state.

Thereafter, the mystical experience of Jesus and his inspiring words were frequently misrepresented in the churches and institutions founded in his name, and they continue to be misrepresented to this day.

1. Those I Met Along The Way (11-20-2015)

As I was walking toward my home, I came upon three men. The first man I saw was lying helpless on the ground and weighted down with a large tangle of chains. “Throw off your chains,” I said to him; “stand, and be free, as your immortal soul intends you to be.”

“I can’t stand,” he said; “perhaps you can help me.” And, attempting to aid in his release, I took hold of one of the chains and lifted it. “Hold on,” cried the man; “would you take from me the knowledge of my sinfulness, and leave me unremorseful? I would rather bear the weight of this chain,” he said. And so, letting go of that chain, I grasped another chain and began to lift it from him.

“O please,” cried the man, “would you take from me the faith in my savior, who was not made, but begotten of God, as Light from uncreated Light, Himself become man so that man might become ‘God—would you take away from me the Way, the Truth, and the Life?’” I let loose my hold on that particularly heavy chain and began to tug on another.

But, as I attempted to lift the chain, it was as though I was causing the man injury and pain, for he cried out, “O sir, that is the holy religious tradition to which I have vowed allegiance, and to which my soul is bound. I would as soon die as remove that chain! I gently placed the chain back in its place on his chest and stood upright.

“No one has wrapped you in these chains but yourself,” I told him; “and you alone can remove them. I’m sorry that I cannot rid you of them, but I will leave you with these words that may give you some guidance: Like the one you call your savior, you are God’s own Life in human form. God is your true savior, and He lives within you *as you*. Therefore, rise up, and throw off your chains.” And then, after so addressing him, I saluted him and continued on my way.

The second man I encountered was armed to the teeth with rifles and handguns, bullets and knives. “Why are you so heavily armed?” I asked him; “and who are you fighting?”

“I am a warrior of Allah,” said the man, “and I am the slayer of the godless infidels!”

“What godless infidels?” I asked.

“Those who do not worship Allah,” he said.

“But do not all men have the right to choose the path that they will take?” I asked, in an attempt to reason with him.

“I am simply following the mandate of the prophet,” said the man. “He has written, ‘Kill those who join other deities to Allah, wherever you shall find them. But if they shall convert, ... then let them go their way.’¹ And again: ‘Say to the infidel, if they desist from their unbelief, what is past is forgiven them. But if they return to it, ... fight then against them to the end, until the only religion left is Allah’s.’²

“All religions already belong to Allah,” I said to him, “whether He is called Allah, Hari, Yahveh, God, or Shiva; for all these names refer to the same Creator and Lord recognized as the universal Spirit dwelling within everyone.”

“You are mistaken,” the man insisted. “The God they worship is not the same as the God we worship.”

“But how,” I asked him, “is it even possible for there to be more than one Creator, more than one all-pervasive Spirit?” But I could see that this line of reasoning was having no effect, and so I took another tack: “The spiritual quest is *not* the pursuit of a worldly victory for a particular sectarian ideology,” I said; “it is not a pursuit that is advanced by physical conquest at all. The spiritual quest is an *interior* pursuit of the direct inner revelation of God as one’s own divine Self.³ And when we do come to know Him, we realize that He can never be limited to any single name, concept, or form.”

“Are you not aware that there are many different religions?” he asked me.

And I replied, “Yes, of course, there are many superficial differences among religious traditions: the various items of faith, the various rules and rituals, are distinctly different in each religious tradition, but so what? They arose in different times and places, in different cultures with different customs, and were written in different languages; so, it is only natural that they would be different. Let them be! If your faith and your rituals help you to become aware of the Divine within you,

adhere to them, and let others adhere to their own. God has made us innately free: we are free to choose our own scriptures, our own ideas, and our own ways of worshiping, so long as by doing so no one is harmed. It is incumbent upon us to leave others to choose their own ways as well. God has given each man and woman the ability to see things from their own individual perspective and by the light of their own intellect.”

For a moment, the man had nothing to say, and so I continued, “Each of us is given a mind capable of thought and judgment and self-rule; each of us is a manifestation of the Divine, possessing the God-given freedom of independent choice. Honor that gift—and give voice to it. In this current period of time, it is crucial to establish this truth on earth for all to share, along with the mandate of ‘Do no harm’. May Allah bless everyone with the possession of this wisdom.”

But the warrior of God was having none of it, and he pushed me away threateningly, and so I continued on my way.

The third man I met was in a mechanized wheelchair; he was noticeably crippled in body, and his face was drawn by his disease into a frightening grimace. He had witnessed my encounter with the other two men, and he came right up to me and said, “Do you not see that those men are deluded who place their faith in a God who doesn’t exist?”

“Oh, but He does exist!” I replied; “He is existence itself.” But this only brought forth a tortured laugh from the man in the chair.

“Well, my friend,” he said; “you may believe what you like, but science makes God unnecessary. This world is but a speck of dust in a random array of similar specks of dust in an endless extension of space. I have investigated and found only emptiness. There is no God, no invisible ruling hand, no bearded archetype upholding this cosmic accident, but only the inexorable play of the laws of physics in a dazzling yet meaningless universal display.”

“You are mistaken,” I told him; “I don’t know why God has chosen to keep your mind in darkness and has not illumined your mind with His gracious presence. I only know that He has revealed Himself in me and has left no doubt that all this universe is His manifestation. I have seen the glory and grandeur of God, and how everything in His universe works in unison with everything else in the great unity of His mind. And I have known beyond the slightest doubt, that I am nothing else

but God's manifest appearance in this world. He is the entire ocean of existence of which I am but a single wavelet. Contrary to your opinion that God doesn't exist, the truth is that nothing else exists but God. It is He who has inspired me with His own thought to sing His praise with His own voice so that all His children might know Him and know His infinite joy."

"You cannot prove to me that God exists," he said; "and I cannot prove to you that He does not exist. But know this: the origin of this universe can be convincingly explained by the laws of science, without recourse to the theory of divine intervention."

"No, there is no proof of God," I said, "—except for the sublime proof that is His revelation within the soul, which you seem not to have experienced. You have my condolences. But be aware that it is never too late: He is ever capable of illuminating your mind with the revelation of His presence. But you must be receptive to the possibility. You must open your mind and your heart to God if you wish to know Him."

"My dear sir," he sternly addressed me, "I am a man of science and I rely on science and the powers of my intellect to investigate the nature of the cosmos; I do not rely on fairytales."

"Very well," I said; "I wish you well." And I bade him "Good day," as we parted company.

Such were the three men I met on my way, each of whom was deluded in his own way and suffering terribly from his mistaken views. But what could be done? There's an old saying that 'you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.' These days it seems that hardly anyone is willing to drink of the 'water' I'm offering. So, while I've been privileged to praise God for so long, it's probably time for me to reduce my activities, leaving the lifting of chains and reasoning with the unreasonable to those who are younger and more capable. Besides, I have faith that God, who is ever in charge of the unfolding of His creation, will bring all good souls home to His infinite Bliss in His own time and in His own way. May His Name be praised!

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NOTES:

1. Quran, IX:5, 6.
2. Quran, VIII:39, 40. Also II:191-193. This scriptural doctrine of ‘conversion or death’ was no doubt a highly expedient factor in the rapid expansion of Islam throughout the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent from the 7th to 13th centuries. But today it is only the relatively few radical Islamic fundamentalists who regard this doctrine as still valid. They have adopted this policy as the foundation of their current universal *jihad* aligned against the entire rest of the world. But, I have it on good authority that for the great majority of all Muslims, this doctrine is considered to be a remnant of an antiquated past and no longer a valid or relevant portion of Islamic scripture.
3. “The spiritual quest is an *inner* pursuit of the direct inner revelation of God as one’s own divine Self.” Some of the greatest mystics of the Islamic tradition (known as ‘Sufis’) were followers of this spiritual quest—mystics such as Hasan al-Basri, Rabi’a Adawiyya, Dhu’n-Nun, Beyizid Bistami, Abu’l-Husayn an-Nuri, Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj, Muhammed ali Ibn Arabi, Fakhruddin Iraqui, and Jalaluddin Rumi, the account of whose lives and teachings may be found in Abhayananda, *History of Mysticism*, Atma Books, 1987 (downloadable free at my website: www.themysticsvision.com.)

* * *

2. The Story of Religion (8-12-13)

Spiritual experience teaches us the truth; and the very first truth we learn, the very first teaching of all the saints, is the universality of the one Spirit. We are accustomed to half a dozen different religions vying for our allegiance, and yet the first spiritual truth to recognize is that God is one and His truth is one: There are not many religions; there is but one religion! The disparate claims of the differing sects and so-called ‘religions’ can be reconciled and understood; but there has been no reconciliation among the different sectarian teachings throughout all our history, but only war between the disparate factions, each representing its own exclusive truth. There is no exclusive truth! There is only an all-inclusive Truth, an all-inclusive Religion. Let me see if I can outline it for you:

“This world and everything in it is made of one Spirit. That Spirit is the world’s governing Power, constituting the Life and Awareness of every creature, and embracing everyone and everything in Its all-encompassing Love. That Spirit is your essence; that Love is who you really are.” Who teaches this religion—whether it is taught by Moses, Jesus, Krishna, the Buddha, or Muhammed—doesn’t matter; that’s but a triviality of history. Who wrote it—whether it appears in this book or that book—doesn’t matter; that’s but a triviality of history. This is the one true and eternal Religion. Make it your own!

But there are some who will say: “No, your religion and mine are far apart. I worship the one Father and His only begotten Son who is my savior”; or they might say, “I worship Krishna, who is the incarnation of God, and I meditate on Him in my heart”; or they may say, “I am a follower of the Buddha. I do not recognize gods, for ultimately, there is only the all-encompassing Void”; or they may say, “I worship Allah, and I live by the words of His Messenger as set down in the Koran”.

Religion is about experiencing your oneness with God. That experience *is* religion. Religion is *not* the idolization of one exemplary historical person who experienced his oneness with God (as in Christianity); it is *not* about becoming obsessed with a written text of moral directives (as in Islam); it is *not* about the following of long-established customs or rituals (as in Judaism); it is *not* about the worship of multiple figurative representations of divine powers (as in Hinduism). So many religions, so many paths. How divergent they seem! And each one believes they are on the exclusive path to blessedness! But blessedness only comes when He reveals that you and He are one—or, more precisely, that there is no you, but only God.

Comment: At first glance, it seems tragic that human beings are so divided in their religious and spiritual understandings, that each person on this earth seems to hold a view that is inconsistent with the view of his or her neighbor. Would it not make for a more agreeable life if everyone understood the nature of our reality in a similar manner? The fact is, however, that each of us lives in a particular cultural region and is evolving under circumstances unique to ourselves and at varying degrees of spiritual awareness. This being so, it appears that we shall always incline toward views vastly different from one another regarding the spiritual nature of our universe and ourselves. To make matters worse, the scope of spiritual experience is also vast—so vast that none of us is likely to span the entirety of it—and so there will always be much more to explore, and much of which we must long remain ignorant.

Universal enlightenment is therefore an ever-receding goal, and yet spiritual awareness is, for each of us, a matter of every moment's concern. Also, how we see the universe and our life in it is constantly evolving, refining the focus of our spiritual sight. We live in isolated worlds of our own making, and yet each of us possesses a wider identity in common—for one Life lives us all, encompassing us in Its oneness. To be sure, our understanding will change, will grow; but we are already at our journey's end at home in Him, and so shall we always be.

* * *

3. Freedom of Religion (rev. 6-11-2017, 7-6-2017)

The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States specifies that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ...” It is this document which guarantees freedom of religion to every citizen of this country. But there was a time in some countries of the world that this freedom was denied to its citizens. In the 7th century of the Current Era, the prophet Muhammed wrote in his Quran: “Kill those who join other deities to Allah, wherever you shall find them. But if they shall convert, ... then let them go their way.”¹ And again: “Say to the infidel, if they desist from their unbelief, what is past is forgiven them. But if they return to it, ... fight then against them to the end, until the only religion left is Allah’s.”²

It is this fear-inspiring scriptural doctrine that provided the means whereby Islam so rapidly expanded throughout the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent in the 7th to 13th centuries; and it is this same policy that is the foundation of the current *jihad* movement on the part of those radical members of Islam currently aligned against the entire rest of the world. This doctrine of ‘conversion or death’ must have seemed to Muhammed a reasonable prohibition of the ungovernable religious chaos prevalent in 7th century Arabia, but today it is regarded as still valid only by a few radical Islamic fundamentalists. For most educated Muslims, and in fact the great majority of Muslims, it is considered to be a remnant of an alien past and no longer a relevant portion of Islamic scripture.

Also, just as everyone easily understands that “*jal*”, “*pani*”, “*agua*” and “water” are merely different names for a substance that relieves thirst, and which remains the same substance regardless of the difference in the names used, they also easily understand that the Creator and Conscious Ground of existence also is one, despite the many different names men use to refer to Him. Therefore, it is recognized that all religions already belong to Allah. He may be called by any number of names: Allah, Hari, Yahveh, God, or Shiva—but all these names refer to the same Creator and Lord recognized as the universal Spirit dwelling within everyone. How, one wonders, would it even be possible for there to be more than one all-pervading and governing Spirit?

There are, indeed, many superficial differences among religious traditions: the various items of faith, the various rules and rituals, are distinctly different in each religious tradition, but so what? They arose in different times and places, in

different cultures with different customs, and were written in different languages; so, it is only natural that they would contain apparent differences. Let them! If your faith and your rituals help you to become aware of the Divine within you, adhere to them, and let others adhere to their own. If Allah wishes to reform anyone's faith, He is well able to do so without your assistance or anyone else's assistance. We are innately free to choose our own scriptures, our own ideas, and our own ways of worshiping; and so, it is incumbent upon us to leave others to choose their own ways as well. God has given each man and woman the ability to see things from their own individual and regional perspective and by the light of their own intellect.

In the United States, Freedom of Religion is mandated by law, and here it is a guaranteed right that many take for granted. Yet we should all be reminded that this written mandate is derived from a precious unwritten law that takes precedence over any and all sectarian religious laws: it is the divine law of human freedom—and it is universal and absolute. Freedom of religion, freedom of thought in general, is a basic right on the part of all peoples and is recognized as such by every world faith. It is this God-given freedom which guarantees the peaceful coexistence of people of differing backgrounds and beliefs and assures their freedom from coercion. In today's world, there is no place for an enforced religion, and those sectarian partisans insisting that the rest of us adopt *their* scriptural creed and its laws must be loudly, explicitly, and universally refuted and condemned throughout all the world.

Let the intelligent people of the world rise up with one voice and declare their unity in opposition to this fanatical policy! Let the various religious bodies and all the world's governments fearlessly declare the priority of universal religious freedom and insist on its adoption throughout the world! Gather up your courage, all you ministers and rulers, all you thinkers and writers, all you godly and wise people of the earth! Speak out the truth that *all* religious scriptures—even those claimed to be divinely inspired—were written by fallible human beings. However, inspired these men may have been, all 'scriptures' are merely products of the minds of men rooted in time and circumstance, and bear no divine universal mandate for all. Each of us is given a mind capable of thought and judgment and self-rule; each of us is a manifestation of the Divine, possessing the God-given freedom of independent choice. Honor that gift—and give voice to it. In this current period of time, it is crucial to establish this truth on earth for all to share, along with the mandate of 'Do no harm'. May Allah bless everyone with the possession of this wisdom.

II.

Those who are on a spiritual quest must realize that this quest is *not* the pursuit of a worldly victory for a particular sectarian ideology; it is not a pursuit that is advanced by physical conquest at all. The spiritual quest is an *inner* pursuit of the direct revelation of God as one's own divine Self. And if we are to directly experience God, or Allah, within ourselves, we must be able to explore all ideas without limits or exclusions; we must be able to court the Divine in our own hearts by every means and by whatever name we choose. When we do come to know Him, we will realize that He can never be limited to any single name, concept, or form.

The inner revelation of the all-pervading Spirit is the same for all and reveals a common truth; and yet that revelation too often becomes colored by the interpretation put forward by the particular religious tradition of the society into which one is born, or to which one is karmically attracted. All religious traditions are born of someone's spiritual experience, and while each tradition contains and preserves some kernel of the truth of that universal experience, the different cultural and historical contexts surrounding each tradition oftentimes serve only to limit our spiritual perspective and understanding. Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and all the rest—mere ideational precepts, mere politics—divide us and disconnect us from the true conscious awareness of our own universally divine reality. Indeed, we as a people have succeeded over the centuries only in obfuscating and concealing the simple truth of our universally divine existence by the many dissevered and dissonant perspectives that we mistakenly call by the name of religion.

Isn't it amazing how the majority of the world's populace continues to hold fast to its childish sectarian mythologies while often remaining completely unaware of the very existence of true spiritual realization! It is as though the general tradition-bound public and those pursuing true spiritual realization exist in distinctly separate dimensions with no means of communicating with each other. It is not only diverse languages and regional cultures that divide us, nor merely the multiplication of disparate voices throughout history that has caused a proliferation of allegiances of faith; we seem to be lost in our own inherently impenetrable and directionless fog, our own innate blindness of ignorance. And we must wonder: 'Will the world's scattered flocks ever return to a single common pasture? Or will each separate collection of partisans remain forever isolated from one another,

perpetuating dissent and confusion and conflict in full view of the reality of an undivided Unity?’

Let us not bicker about the differences in religious traditions in a misguided attempt to find which of them is true. None of the various religious traditions contains truth in themselves; and yet each of them possesses the ability to lead one to the *experience* of truth. It is the experience of the Divine Self that is the prize to be sought; religious institutions merely provide pathways to that inner experience wherein lies all certainty and satisfaction. The purpose of all religious traditions is to focus the mind on God, who lives within the heart of every soul. When that Divine Spirit draws the soul to the realization of its oneness with Himself, then and only then is the truth found. If your religious tradition is truly worthy of your allegiance, it will lead you from the exterior to the interior, from the outer environment to the inner environment, and from thought construction to the still clarity of vision. Become quiet, and search for your Divine Lord, not within the pages of a book, but within yourself. If He reveals Himself, you will know Him as your own Self as well. Then your religious path will have fulfilled its purpose, and you will have no further need of a religious path. For here is the secret truth:

Though you play the game
Of searching for God’s presence,
And though at times it seems that you are
Lost in this persuasive dream of time,
The truth is that you are the One
Who is imagining this broad fantasy.

All this is You: You are the seeker,
The search, and that which is sought;
You are truly the divine Self in all.
You have only temporarily forgotten
That you reign supreme as the eternal One,
Forever unbounded by time or place.

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NOTES:

1. Quran, IX:5, 6.

2. Quran, VIII:39, 40. Also II:191-193.

3. Anyone wishing to learn more about the lives and teachings of the many mystics of all religious and philosophical traditions who've lived throughout history may do so by downloading my free ebook, *History of Mysticism*, at my website: www.themysticsvision.com.

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4. Realistic Religion (12-27-13)

Current popular religious ideologies tend to idolize one or another historical religious figure whose spiritual wisdom is attributed to their unique divine origin and status. But as our understanding evolves, we are learning that each of us is of divine origin and that we too are able to access the fountain of spiritual wisdom within ourselves. Today, we understand that a number of people throughout history have experienced a revelation on the psycho-spiritual level that transcends the spatio-temporal world, and essentially unites the individual consciousness with the all-embracing eternal Consciousness. This 'mystical' experience is still regarded as uncommon, and yet is estimated to occur to one person in every million, which amounts to around 7000 people in today's world population of seven billion. Perhaps that is a generous estimate, but certainly a great number of people throughout the world have experienced at least momentary breakthroughs in consciousness that revealed a deeper, spiritual, level of reality underlying this apparently concrete world of material phenomena.

A more realistic approach to our religious understanding, therefore, would be to reject the deification and worship of a few historical religious figures, to see them rather as inspirational exemplars; and to embrace the ever-present possibility that we and all men and women might experience in ourselves an awareness of our own divine source in this very lifetime, and know firsthand the certainty of our own divine Self. The willingness to follow this path will not appeal to everyone, of course; but only to those few who are called to it. For we are not able to seek or bring about the experience of 'union with God' of our own will; it is clearly the

will of God Himself that sets us on the path and brings us to that ineffable experience.

Nor is it possible to know whom He will choose, but He seems to choose the very intelligent, the very compassionate, those selfless souls surrendered to His will; and He inevitably draws them within themselves through introspection and contemplation to His meeting place where those souls are merged in His eternal awareness. But this 'mystical' path is not without obstacles; it is a path that demands much courage and sacrifice, for the mystic will undoubtedly face much opposition from a skeptical world. Nor should he expect any worldly rewards, for the only rewards obtainable in the mystic's life are the seeds of hope, faith and joy that he is able to plant and blossom in the hearts of those he touches. And his greatest happiness and satisfaction comes from his lifelong service in the praise of God to His glory and to the benefit of all His children.

* * *

5. Universal Spiritual Knowledge (6-3-14; rev. 9-21-2015)

As a young man, I was associated with a large spiritual organization, and was able to experience firsthand the exclusivity and group isolation that is a necessary offshoot of all religious or spiritual organizations centered on the adoration of any one spiritual teacher. However marvelously gifted or cloaked in legend such teachers or gurus may be, the exclusive adulation of any one teacher, whether living or dead, is much less worthy of emphasis than the demonstrable fact that all the many spiritual figures throughout history experienced an identical revelation of divine identity.

Understandably, the ‘disciples’ of each charismatic spiritual teacher are drawn to and place their faith and devotion in the one they see and know, and to whose qualities they are most attracted. And yet, as I witnessed exemplified in the organization with which I was associated, the individual presence, personality, powers, and teachings of a particular ‘guru’, along with his lineage, tend to become the sole center of the organization’s attention, and the work of the group becomes not the promulgation of universal spiritual knowledge, but the promotion of membership in that particular group, and the ritualized adoration and adulation of the celebrated teacher.

This pattern appears in every religious/spiritual organization, and each such organization then stands, if not in opposition to all others, at least independent of and indifferent to all others. Each individual teacher, and his/her individual group of devotees is distinct from and exclusive to all other teachers and organizations. Each group comprises an independent corporate business enterprise whose purpose is to perpetuate itself. How could it be otherwise? Unless—if only we could imagine it—there was at heart a true interest in promoting the dissemination of a common universal spiritual knowledge, regardless of trademarks, copyrights, and the self-interest of individual spiritual teachers or organizations.

It was in the interest of this common pan-historical spiritual knowledge that I wrote my *History of Mysticism*, which emphasizes the common non-sectarian mystical experience occurring throughout history to countless individuals regardless of religious or organizational ties. Its purpose was to draw attention, not to any one particular spiritual teacher, but to the many individuals of various lands and traditions living over an immense period of time who have experienced a common revelation of the divine nature of existence. It is they who make up the

grand tapestry of spiritual knowledge that is the legacy and heritage of all, regardless of separate affiliations—a heritage that includes all teachers and all disciples in one universal and undeniable wealth of accumulated understanding, framed in a million ways and languages.

And yet, it is almost impossible for the partisan members of the various spiritual organizations to recognize those mystics and teachers outside the bounds of their own trademarked groups as brothers and sisters in a common vision, for it does not serve their separate self-interests or the long-term survival of their individual organizations to do so. The separate sectarian religious powers prefer not to acknowledge the universality of the mystical experience of ‘illumination’, ‘Self-realization’, or ‘enlightenment’; for they are heavily committed to and invested in the claim to their own long-established and unique religious traditions based on distinct historical persons and events. Thus, though Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism are based on an identical experiential foundation, each of these religious traditions has continued for centuries to hold fast to its own unique historically based perspectives and foundations and its own ritualized observations, while ignoring the common experiential root of all.

A universal spirituality, informed by a broad knowledge of all religious traditions and their common mystical origin is not taught in the partisan churches, temples, mosques or synagogues; nor is it taught in our public schools or universities. Indeed, the people are so deeply steeped in the tradition of spiritual ignorance, it appears that there is little possibility that the tide can ever be turned. Certainly, the awakening from this profound slumber will not suddenly occur overnight. It will be a long, slow progression, as every cultural advance has been and must be. And it will be a result of a worldwide effort at education that will require many voices. Will you do your part? Help spread the word! One thing you can do is to promote and disseminate free ebook copies of *History of Mysticism* in your country and abroad. You can also lend your own voice to the universal non-religious spiritual revolution. Thank you.

* * *

6. The Story of Jesus (12-14-2015; rev. 6-19-2017)

The story of Jesus of Nazareth in the New Testament of the Bible is a true story—well, most of it is anyway. The virgin birth and the resurrection were added by well-meaning zealots, but the rest is factual. Jesus, as a young man, came under the influence of the wandering holy man, John, the Baptist, and was initiated by him in the river Jordan. At that time, Jesus had a profound experience of his own divinity. The grace of God awoke in him, revealing the truth that he was indeed a manifestation of God in human form. The part of the story that often gets left out, however, is that this experience of divine Grace revealed to Jesus not only his own divinity, but the divinity of all existence. He realized in that enlightening moment that nothing other than God exists, that all this universe of manifold forms—the clouds, the grass, all the creatures, the vast expanse of stars and planets and galaxies—all are made of God's creative light. And with that revelation, the aim of awakening that knowledge in the hearts and minds of all people became the mission of Jesus' brief life.

God's revelation showed to Jesus that he and the Father are one; and this is a truth that we are able to know as well. It is not necessary that our mother's hymen grow back, that we were conceived in a manner other than the normal one, or that after our death we are seen rising from our grave. We need only the Grace of God, revealing the knowledge that we consist of God's own Being; that He is our own foundation and eternal Self. God's revelation in the story of Jesus is a real-life occurrence that has played out many times in the real lives of various people of various lands who have been graced by God over the millennia. And while, in the West, we are taught the life and tragic death of Jesus, few are aware of the many others who have known their divine identity and spoke of it, such as Plotinus, or al-Hallaj or Meister Eckhart, or Rumi, or Shankaracharya, or Ibn Arabi, or any of the hundreds of other mystics who are renowned in other parts of the world.¹

NOTE:

If you would like to know about some of the many well-known mystics besides Jesus who have realized their identity in God, please see my book, *History of Mysticism*. Download it at: www.themysticsvision.com.

7. Insights Into The Founding of A Religious Tradition (6-23-2017)

Let me tell you what I believe happened long ago in the land of Israel. When Jesus was baptized in his late twenties by the sage, John, he received the gift of God's grace. That grace revealed to him the spiritual nature of this world and all that's in it. He, himself, he realized, was made of God and was nothing else but God. He was suddenly aware that he was all-embracing Spirit, no longer confined solely to this Jesus body, but existing everywhere, in the clouds, in the soil, in the stars, and in the creatures of the wood. It was a startling revelation, awakening in him a new awareness that he and all beings were contained in and consist of the all-pervasive divine being. In the days to come, he would say to his comrades, "I am in God, and God is in me. I and the Father are one". He said this as one who had observed a new empirical fact and was declaring his astounding discovery. But it was difficult for anyone who had not experienced that divine revelation to grasp the truth of what he was saying.

Jesus' words were a true reflection of the divine revelation that occurred within him, and yet it is easy to see that they could be offensive to those with strongly held traditional religious beliefs. But Jesus was totally convinced that it was his God-given mission to relate to the people the knowledge that had been revealed in him. However, a group of religious 'authorities' made it their mission to put an end to his public pronouncements, and they incited the prelate of the occupying Roman forces to arrest Jesus for sedition against the state, a crime punishable by death by crucifixion.

After Jesus was cruelly killed at the insistence of the ignorant mob, his followers, having remembered his words but unable to fully comprehend their meaning, became convinced that he had not been a mere mortal, but was undoubtedly the very incarnation of God. It was probably a few of these followers who hastily hatched a plot: it was a simple matter to move Jesus' body under cover of dark to an undisclosed grave, and the imaginations of the superstitious villagers would do the rest. It was no doubt another of the group who served as a biographer who fashioned a lovely story of how God visited Jesus' mother, while she was still a virgin, and caused her to conceive him supernaturally (even though she had already had numerous children by the time of Jesus' birth).

It was not long before Jesus was officially declared by his followers to be the *bona fide* Son of God, and a suitable theology was constructed to reflect his divinity.

However, by their counterfeit theology, the followers unwittingly put an end to the significance of Jesus' empirical observation of his spiritual nature, for obviously that observation applied only to God-men like him, and not to ordinary meat-bodied people like the rest of us.

Then, after a couple of centuries, along comes another fellow who has the same revelation that all this is God's appearance in form, and he says: "I am in God, and God is in me. I and the Father are one." But this time it's apparent that he's just an ordinary person. No one claims that he is an incarnation of God—not even him. So, this casts a different light on what Jesus said. Here are two people saying the same thing, though one of them was definitely not a God, but just a man. Clearly, it was not necessary to be a God or a relative of God in order to be visited by this revelation. But can the vision of these men be true? Can it possibly be true that all of us are made of God-stuff? Can it be that we really are living in 'the kingdom of God'? That we are in Him, and that He is in fact our very self?

I suggest that we look carefully at what young Jesus said. Look at what he actually said! He was telling us way back then of our true spiritual nature. But no one who had not experienced that revelation for themselves could understand what he was saying. Now, two thousand years later, there have been many all over the world who have had the same revelatory experience and have declared the same truth that Jesus expressed. How many more will need to experience this revelation and make the same declaration? Only time will tell.

* * *

8. The Wisdom of Jesus (3-27-2016)

A group of Pharisees gathered around Jesus, and a lawyer among them, who wanted to test Jesus, asked him:

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”

Jesus [quoting Moses] said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment (*Deuteronomy*. 6:5). “And the second is like it: [and Jesus quoted from the words of Moses again] ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (*Leviticus*. 19:18) “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” ¹

These two directives which Jesus gave the lawyer are universal and are not just for the followers of Judaism or of Jesus, but for all people: The first directive is paramount, and is theocentric—that is, one’s love is to be focused on God within; the second is derivative of the first and is anthropocentric—stating that one’s love is to be freely shared with others. They are opposing directives, insofar as the direction of the first is interior and the direction of the second is exterior; yet they are complementary. The interior focus and the outer focus are of equal importance to a man’s soul, as is the subtle and delicate balance between the two.

In the early (Catholic) tradition of Christianity, there was a tendency to emphasize the theocentric directive, which gave rise to the Desert fathers, and the founding of the contemplative Orders; whereas the Reformers of the 16th century, who became known as Protestants, preferred to emphasize the anthropocentric focus. Therefore, the early emphasis on the contemplative life of prayer and meditation on God gave way to a greater emphasis on the concern for benefiting mankind through good works. The balance, once heavily favoring the inward pursuit of God-knowledge, swung to the active outer pursuit of social justice and human charity. It is this anthropocentric focus that remains the predominant focus of Christianity today, particularly in North America.

But, as Jesus pointed out, it is the theocentric focus that is primary and fundamental; the anthropocentric directive is secondary and follows from the wisdom and love acquired in the primary focus on God. And yet, today, despite the directive from Jesus and the many reminders from Eastern yogis and sages regarding the need for a contemplative life, we in the West have almost completely forgotten the necessity of the interior focus on God. In many

segments of Western society, God has become an unnecessary hypothesis in the current formulation of reality. We have so filled our heads with purely material values and our world with so many glittering technological marvels that we as a people are blinded to the larger existential picture, and have clearly lost appreciation for our divine roots, and for the One in whom we continue to live and move and have our being.

It's true that we have greatly advanced as a society in our ability to carry out the second of Jesus' directives, but if we forget the first of Jesus' directives, and lose sight of our own divine Self—the God who lives in our hearts, who is the sole source of our wisdom, our power, and our joy—with what shall we benefit others? If we can no longer soar into the rare atmosphere of His infinite wisdom, if we can no longer drink from the deep wellspring of His all-embracing love, what wisdom and what love shall we have to share with others? And, without our inner focus on God, what will be the quality of our own inner lives?

* * *

NOTES:

1. Quote is from *Matthew.22: 36-40; The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, New York, Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2006; p. 1140.

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9. Nondualism In The Teachings of Jesus (from *The Wisdom of Vedanta*, 1991; rev. 6-19-2017)

It is important to stress the fact that no one religion holds deed to the Truth over and above the devotees of other lands and other religious traditions. Every religious tradition worth its salt recognizes the same eternal Truth; and all great religious teachers have taught according to their own intimate experience of God, their “mystical vision”—whether it is called “*samadhi*,” “*nirvana*,” “*fana*,” or “union with God.” Since there is but one ultimate Reality, which all share, each one who has experienced the Truth has experienced that same ultimate Reality. Naturally, therefore, their teachings about it, and about how one can experience It for oneself, are bound to be identical.

However, the languages and cultures of the various teachers who have lived throughout history are, no doubt, different from one another. Their personalities and life-styles are different. But their vision is one, and the path they teach to it is one. In the mystical experience, which transcends all religious traditions and cultures and languages, the Christian and the Vedantist alike come to the same realization: They realize the oneness of their own soul and God, the Soul of the universe. It is this very experience, which prompted Jesus, the originator of Christianity, to explain at various times to his disciples that he had known the great Unity in which he and the Father of the universe were one:

“If you knew who I am,” he said, you would also know the Father. Knowing me, you know Him; seeing me, you see Him. Do you not understand that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? It is the Father who dwells in me doing His own work. Understand me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. ¹

This is the truth that Vedanta speaks of as “Non-Dualism.” The term, “Unity,” is, of course, the same in meaning; but it seems that the declaration, “not-two” is more powerfully emphatic than a mere assertion of oneness. Indeed, the word, “Unity” is often used by religionists who apply it to God, but who have not even considered the thought that they themselves are logically included in an *absolute* Unity. Non-Dualism, the philosophy of absolute Unity, is the central teaching, not only of Vedanta, but of all genuine seers of Truth. This position is embodied in the Vedantic assertion, *tat twam asi*, “That thou art.”

Once we begin to look at the teachings of Jesus in the light of his “mystical” experience of Unity, we begin to have a much clearer perspective on all the aspects of the life and teaching of the man. His teachings, like those of the various Vedantic sages who’ve taught throughout the ages, is that the soul of man is none other than the one Divinity, none other than God; and that this Divine Identity can be experienced and known through the revelation that occurs inwardly, by the grace of God, to those who prepare and purify their minds and hearts to receive it. The words of Jesus are so well known to us from our childhood that, perhaps, they have lost their meaning through our over-familiarity with them. He attempted to explain to us, with the words, “I and the Father are one,” that the “I,” our own inner awareness of self, is none other than the one Self, the one Awareness, the Lord and Father of us all.

Why, then, are we so unable to see it? Why should it be so hard for us to attain to that purity of heart, which Jesus declared so essential to Its vision? Probably because we have not really tried—not the way Jesus did, going off into the wilderness, jeopardizing everything else in his life for this one aim, focusing completely and entirely on attaining the vision of God. Not the way the Buddha did. Not the way all those who have experienced God have done. Perhaps we’re not ready for such a concentrated effort just yet. Perhaps we have other desires yet to dispense with before we will be free enough to seek so high a goal. For us, perhaps, there is yet much to be done to soften the heart, so that we are pure enough to hear the call of Divine Grace. It is to such as us, for whom much yet needs to be accomplished toward the attainment of a “pure heart,” that Jesus spoke.

All of what Jesus taught to his disciples was by way of explaining to them that his real nature, and that of all men, is Divine; and that the reality of this could be realized directly. Furthermore, he taught them the path, or method, to follow in order to attain this direct realization. Let us look to his own words to corroborate this: In the Gospel book of John, he laments to God, “O righteous Father, the world has not known Thee. But I have known Thee.”² And, as he sat among the orthodox religionists in the Jewish temple, he said, “You say that He is your God, yet you have not known Him. But I have known Him.”³ Jesus had “known” God within himself. Whether this ‘mystical’ experience of revelation occurred at the moment of his initiation by John the Baptist, or later, during his time in the wilderness, we cannot know for certain. However, it is certain that that experience had separated him and effectively isolated him from his brothers, because he alone among his contemporaries seemed to possess this rare knowledge of the truth of all existence.

This is the difficult plight of all those who have been graced with “the vision of God.” It is the greatest of gifts, it is the greatest of all possible visions; and yet, because the knowledge so received is completely contrary to what all men believe regarding God and the soul, it is a terribly alienating knowledge, which brings upon its possessor the scorn and derision of all mankind. History is replete with examples of others who, having attained this saving knowledge, found the world unwilling to accept it, and ready to defend its ignorance aggressively. This circumstance is little changed today.

Because the “vision” of God was so difficult to convey to those who had not experienced it, Jesus spoke often by way of analogy or metaphor in order to make his meaning clear. He spoke of the experience of “seeing” God as entering into a realm beyond this world, a realm where only God is. In his own Aramaic language, he called this realm *malkutha*. In the Greek translation, it is *basileia*. In English, it is usually rendered as “the kingdom of God.”

His disciples asked him, “When will the kingdom come?” Jesus said, “It will not come by waiting for it. It will not be a matter of saying ‘Here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’ Rather, the kingdom of the Father is [already] spread out upon the earth, and [yet] men do not see it.”⁴

... Indeed, what you look forward to has already come, but you do not recognize it.”⁵

The Pharisees asked him, “When will the kingdom of God come?” He said, “You cannot tell by signs [i.e., by observations] when the kingdom of God will come. There will be no saying, “Look, here it is!” or “There it is!” For, in fact, the kingdom of God is [experienced] within you.”⁶

Jesus said, “If those who lead you say to you, “See, the kingdom is in the sky,” then the birds of the sky will have preceded you. If they say to you, “It is in the sea,” then the fish will precede you. Rather the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you [as well]. When you come to know your Self, then you [i.e., your true nature] will be known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living Father. But if you will not know your Self, you live in poverty [i.e., you live in the illusion that you are a pitiful creature far from

God].”⁷

Another of Jesus’ metaphors utilized the terms, “Light” and “darkness” to represent the Divinity and the inherent delusion of man, respectively:

Jesus said, “The world’s images are manifest to man, but the Light in them remains concealed; within the image is the Light of the Father. He becomes manifest as the images, but, as the Light, He is concealed.”⁸

He said to them, “There is a Light within a man of Light, and It lights up the whole world. If it does not shine, he is in darkness.”⁹

These are terms which have been used since time immemorial to represent the Divine Consciousness in man and the hazy ignorance, which obscures It. In the very first paragraph of the Gospel of John, we find an excellent explanation of these two principles, and their Greek synonyms, *Theos* and *Logos*;

In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. He [or It] was with God in the beginning. All things were made by Him; without Him nothing was made. Within Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of man. And the Light shone in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended It not.¹⁰

A word of explanation is necessary: These two terms, “Light and “darkness,” are also indicative of the cosmic aspects of Reality; in other words, they are not only the Divine Consciousness in man and the darkness of unknowing, but they are, at a higher level, the very Godhead and Its Power of manifestation. They are those same two principles we have so often run into, called “Brahman and Maya,” “Purusha and Prakrti,” “Shiva and Shakti.” It is the Godhead in us, which provides the Light in us; it is the manifestory principle, which, in the process of creating an individual soul-mind-body, provides us with all the obscuration necessary to keep us in the dark as to our infinite and eternal Identity.

Jesus said, “If they ask you, ‘Where did you come from?’ say to them, ‘We came from the Light, the place where the Light came into being of Its own accord and established Itself and became manifest through our image.’

“If they ask you, ‘Are you It?’ say, ‘We are Its children, and we are the elect of the living Father.’ If they ask you, ‘What is the sign of your Father in you?’ say to them, ‘It is movement and repose.’”¹¹

Jesus said, “I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest. Everything came forth from me, and everything returns to me. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift a stone, and you will find me there.”¹²

Here, Jesus identifies with the Eternal Light; but he seems never to have intended to imply that he was uniquely and exclusively identical with It; it should be clear that his intention was always to convey the truth that all men are, in essence, the transcendent Consciousness, manifest in form:

Ye are the Light of the world. Let your Light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.¹³

Frequently he declared to his followers that they too would come to the same realization that he had experienced:

“I tell you this,” he said to them; “there are some of those standing here who will not taste death before they have seen the kingdom of God already come in full power.”¹⁴

“The heavens and the earth will be rolled up in your presence. And the one who lives from the living ONE will not see death. Have I not said: ‘whoever finds his Self is superior to the world?’”¹⁵

“Take heed of the living ONE while you are alive, lest you die and seek to see Him and be unable to do so.”¹⁶

“That which you have will save you if you bring It forth from yourselves. That which you do not have within you will destroy you.”¹⁷

“That which you have” is, of course, the Truth, the Light, the Divinity who manifests as you. “That which you do not have” refers to the false identity of separate individuality, which is simply a lie. It is the wrong understanding of who you are that limits you, and which prevents you from experiencing the Eternal.

The teaching, common to all true “mystics” who have realized the Highest, is “*You are the Light of the world! You are That! Identify with the Light, the eternal Truth, for That is who you really are!*” And yet Jesus did not wish that this should remain a mere matter of faith with his disciples; he wished them to realize this truth for themselves. And he taught them the method by which he had come to know God. Like all great seers, he knew both the means and the end, he knew both the One and the many. Thus, we hear in the message of Jesus an apparent ambiguity, which is necessitated by the paradoxical nature of the Reality.

In the One, the two—soul and God—play their love-game of devotion. At one moment, the soul speaks of God, its “Father”; at another moment, it is identified with God, and speaks of “I.” Likewise, in the words of Jesus to his disciples, we see this same complementarity: At one moment, he speaks of dualistic devotion in the form of prayer (“Our Father, who art in heaven”); and at another moment he asserts his oneness, his identity, with God (“Lift the stone and I am there ...”). But he cautioned his disciples against offending others with this attitude (“If they ask you, ‘Are you It?’ say, ‘We are Its children ...’”).

At times, identifying with the One, he asserts that he has the power to grant the experience of Unity (“I shall give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched and what has never occurred to the human mind”).¹⁸ And at other times, identifying with the human soul, he gives all credit to God, the Father (“Why do you call me good? There is no one good but the ONE, that is God.”).¹⁹

There is an interesting story that appears in both Matthew and Luke which illustrates the knowledge, from the standpoint of the individual soul, that the realization of God comes, not by any deed of one’s own, but solely by the grace of God: Jesus had just commented upon how difficult it would be for a young man, otherwise spiritually inclined, who was attached to his worldly wealth and occupations, to realize God; and his disciples, who were gathered around, were

somewhat disturbed by this, and asked, “Then, who *can* attain salvation?” And Jesus answered, “For man it is impossible; but for God it is possible.”

And Peter, understanding that Jesus is denying that any man, by his own efforts, can bring about that experience, but only God, by His grace, gives this enlightenment, objected: “But we here have left our belongings to become your followers!” And Jesus, wishing to assure them that any effort toward God-realization will bear its fruits in this life and in lives to come, said to them: “I tell you this; there is no one who has given up home, or wife, brothers, parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not be repaid many times over in this time, and in the time to come [will] know eternal Life.”²⁰ He could guarantee to no one that knowledge of God; that was in the hands of God. But Jesus knew that whatever efforts one makes toward God must bear their fruits in this life, and in the lives to come.

And so, throughout the teachings of Jesus, one finds these two, apparently contradictory, attitudes intermingled: the attitude of the *jnani* (“I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest”); and the attitude of the *bhakta* (“Father, father, why hast Thou forsaken me?”). They are the two voices of the illumined man, for he is both, the transcendent Unity and the imaged soul; he has “seen” this unity in the “mystical experience.”

Jesus had experienced the ultimate Truth; he had clearly seen and known It beyond any doubt; and he knew that the consciousness that lived as him was the one Consciousness of all. He knew that he was the living Awareness from which this entire universe is born. This was the certain, indubitable, truth; and yet Jesus found but few who could even comprehend it. For the most part, those to whom he spoke were well-meaning religionists who were incapable of accepting the profound meaning of his words. The religious orthodoxy of his time, like all such orthodoxies, fostered a self-serving lip-service to spiritual ideals, and observed all sorts of symbolic rituals, but was entirely ignorant of the fact that the ultimate reality could be directly known by a pure and devout soul, and that this was the real purpose of all religious practice.

Jesus realized, of course, that despite the overwhelming influence of the orthodox religionists, still, in his own Judaic tradition, there had been other seers of God, who had known and taught this truth. “I come,” said Jesus, “not to destroy the law [of the Prophets], but to fulfill it.”²¹ He knew also that any person who announced the fact that they had seen and known God would be persecuted and

belittled and regarded as an infidel and a liar. In the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus is reported to have said, “He who knows the Father (the transcendent Absolute) and the Mother (the creative Principle) will be called a son-of-a-bitch!”²² It seems he was making a pun on the fact that one who does *not* know his father and mother is usually referred to in this fashion; but, in his case, he had known the Father of the universe, and knew the Power (of Mother Nature) behind the entire creation, and still he was called this derisive name.

It is the common experience of all the great seers, from Lao Tze to Socrates and Heraclitus, from Plotinus and al-Hallaj to Meister Eckhart and St. John of the Cross. All were cruelly tortured and persecuted for their goodness and wisdom. Jesus too found the world of men wanting in understanding; he said:

I took my place in the midst of the world, and I went among the people. I found all of them intoxicated [with pride and ignorance]; I found none of them thirsty [for Truth]. And my soul became sorrowful for the sons of men, because they are blind in their hearts and do not have vision. Empty they came into the world, and empty they wish to leave the world. But, for the moment, they are intoxicated; when they shake off their wine, then they will repent.²³

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NOTES:

1. *John, Gospel Of*, 13:40.
2. *Ibid.*, 17:25.
3. *Ibid.*, 8:54.
4. *Thomas, Gospel Of*, 114; (trans. by Thomas O. Lambdin), Robinson, James M. (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library*; San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1977, p. 138.
5. *Ibid.*, 51, p. 132.
6. *Luke, Gospel Of*, 17:20.
7. *Thomas, Gospel Of*, 3; Robinson, James M. (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library*; San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1977, p. 126.
8. *Ibid.*, 83, p. 135.
9. *Ibid.*, 24, p. 129.

10. *John, Gospel Of*, 1:1.
11. *Thomas, Gospel Of*, 50, Robinson, James M. (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library*; San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1977, p. 132.
12. *Ibid.*, 77, p. 135.
13. *Matthew, Gospel Of*, 5:14-16.
14. *Mark, Gospel Of*, 9:1.
15. *Thomas Gospel Of*, 111; Robinson, 1977, p.138.
16. *Ibid.*, 59, p. 132.
17. *Ibid.*, 70, p. 134.
18. *Ibid.*, 17, p. 128.
19. *Luke, Gospel Of*, 18:18.
20. *Ibid.*, 18:18-30; *Matthew, Gospel Of*, 19:16.
21. *Matthew, Gospel Of*, 5:17.
22. *Thomas, Gospel Of*, 105, Robinson, 1977, p. 137.
23. *Ibid.*, 28, p. 130.

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10. Why We Celebrate The Birth of Jesus (12-07-2013)

Every year, at this time, we celebrate the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Why do we celebrate the birth of Jesus? Because he attempted to teach the populace of his time the mystical truth that had been revealed to him: that all the world is, and each of us are, the manifestation of the one Divinity. But, as he went about teaching, there were many who believed he was claiming that he alone was of Divine origin, that he alone was someone special; and so, they cruelly murdered him. And today, two thousand years after his martyrdom, many, under the banner of his name, promulgate the same erroneous message that Jesus, and Jesus alone, was the sole manifestation of God on earth. But even a cursory search of Jesus' teachings will reveal that this is not at all what he taught.

His was a mystical understanding, not easy for an uninitiated populace to comprehend. It was a metaphysical understanding derived from a deep spiritual vision that everything and everyone is born of God and is nothing else but that one Divinity, that God is the hidden Light that projects the images of all things and all beings in the world and exists within them as their source and creator:

“Jesus said, ‘The world’s images are manifest to man, but the Light in them remains concealed; within the image is the Light of the Father. He becomes manifest as the images, but, as the Light, He is concealed’.”¹

Jesus knew that, in his innermost being, he himself was that Light; he had seen in the full clarity of his mystical vision that the divine Light was his sole identity, and he declared it openly:

“Jesus said, ‘I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest. Everything came forth from me, and everything returns to me. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift a stone, and you will find me there.’”²

“If you knew who I am,” he said, “you would also know the Father. Knowing me, you know Him; seeing me, you see Him. Do you not understand that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? It is the Father who dwells in me doing His own work. Understand me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.”³

But it is also clear that Jesus never meant this truth to be applied exclusively to himself; he knew very well that *everyone else* was also that Light; everyone else existed in the Father as well, and everyone else contained the Father within them—even though they might not be aware of it yet:

“He said to them, ‘There is a Light within a man of Light, and It lights up the whole world. If it does not shine [within that man], he is in darkness.’”⁴

Jesus taught everyone who would hear him that the eternal Light is the sole reality manifest as each of us: ‘You are that light’ he said; it is who you are!’

“You are the Light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp-stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your Light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”⁵

Many others, since the time of Jesus, have been graced with the vision of God, and they too have proclaimed the saving knowledge that God is realizable as the source and manifestation of one’s very being, one’s very Self. But Jesus, because of his extraordinary life, his words, and his martyrdom, is remembered and celebrated above all others as the knower of knowers, the teacher of teachers, and the very brightest of stars in God’s heaven.

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NOTES:

1. James Robinson, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 1977; 83, p. 135.
2. *Ibid.*, 77, p. 135.
3. The Gospel of John 13:40
4. James Robinson, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 1977; 24, p. 129.
5. The Gospel of Matthew 5:14-16.
6. For more about Jesus and the many others throughout history who knew and taught the message of the divine Self, please see my book, *History of Mysticism: The Unchanging Testament*.

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11. A Seeing Man In A Blind World (7-17-2015)

Jesus stood up before the assembled crowd: “Greetings friends and neighbors,” he said. “On rare occasions, a fortunate person is granted clear vision, and sees into the very fabric of the reality in which we live. For some reason, I have been granted such a vision, and I wish to share with you what I have seen:

“All that we perceive in this world is nothing but God’s glory! He has spread this feast before us of His own delight and joy; even we who enjoy this feast are born of His manifest delight. All is His dream-like production, born of the power of His own unfathomable mind. I saw that this very body, and this very awareness is His own, beyond this time and place that we see and relate to. We are made of eternal God and live within Him; and all that occurs within this world is His playful delight.

“Look at me, my friends: Do you not see that I am in God and God is in me? The same is true for you as well! I have seen it, and I swear it’s true. What else is this world but God’s delight? What else are we but His forms, produced by His will and formed of His substance? If you could see with my eyes, you would know the truth that all that *is* is God; He is in the clouds and in the gritty soil; He lives as every creature in the grass and as every creature in the air. He lives as you, and you are His own dear self. You can find Him therefore by turning within. There He lives and operates as you. Know Him, and your life will be blessed. You will see with His all-encompassing eye, and you will delight in His unfailing guidance. See Him in all, and love Him in all; and above all, know that you are His own, and live out your life in great joy and sweetness. Go now and remember my words.”

* * *

12. The Demystification of Jesus (4-5-2016)

In the past, when it came to the founding of a new religion, the founding parties frequently deemed it necessary to establish the supernatural birth and immortality of the religion's namesake in order for that religion to be acceptable to the gullible masses. This, it seems, was the case as well with the establishment of Christianity, in which Jesus, the slain mystical leader of the first century, was deified in all popular accounts as the divinely appointed savior (Hebrew: *Messiah*), and the divinely anointed one (Greek: *Christos*). The zealous followers who wrote about Jesus' life in what are called *the Gospels* often did not have personal contact with him, but only the benefit of hearsay; moreover, as early advocates of the newly formed sectarian Church of Christianity, they had an incentive to portray him as a supernatural being, and the stories of his virgin birth and resurrection after death were fashioned to support that legend. The effect of these propagandist legends was that the crucified Jesus quickly came to be regarded by the people as an element of Divinity Itself—the “Son” of God, or at least the *Logos*, or creative power, of God, who would forever dwell thereafter in some ethereal realm at the right hand of God, sitting in eternal judgment of the living and the dead.

For twenty centuries, we in the West have allowed these fairytales to avoid the overt censorship of our rational judgments, but the time is now long past due for reasonable men to make a serious effort at demystifying and demythologizing the legend of Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth, who lived in the first century of the Current Era, and was slain by order of the Roman prelate, Pontius Pilate, was indeed a real, historical person, like you and me. Whether the need for the religious zealots of that early period to exaggerate and embellish their accounts of the lives and exploits of those who had direct experience of the Divine was born of ignorance or expediency is not for us to say, but it has left us with the legend of a ‘fairy-tale’ Jesus, which maligns and denigrates the man himself, misrepresents the legacy of his ‘mystical experience’, and leaves a false impression in the minds of simple unlearned people regarding the life and attainments of one of our greatest mystics.

In the two thousand years since Jesus lived, a great deal of knowledge concerning subsequent mystics of all religious affiliations and the nature of mystical experience has been accumulated. Despite objections from the cynics from among the strictly empirical sciences, today there is universal recognition of the factual occurrence of mystical experience to isolated individuals throughout recorded history, and it is clear that Jesus was one such individual. Though many still cling

blindly to the ancient myths and legends fostered by the early enthusiasts of the Church, there is ample evidence to suggest that Jesus was simply a bright young Jewish lad educated in the Judaic tradition who, in his late twenties, participated in a baptism at the hands of a holy man, and suddenly had an opening of his spirit and was illumined by the Grace of God.¹

The truth is that all men are born of God; all are Divine—not one more than another. To continue to regard Jesus as a special incarnation of God may seem harmless enough, but it not only puts him in a category that does not biologically exist, it tends to set him apart as an unattainable model for human behavior; whereas if he is seen as a normal human being graced by God he becomes someone to whom we can relate, someone we can genuinely admire and emulate. But more importantly, the false notion of who Jesus was prevents us from the recognition of the fact that mystical experience is an avenue open to all of us through prayer, and that the life of Jesus is clearly relevant to our own human lives and understanding; that Jesus is not just a figurative icon to worship as an impossible ideal. He was a man like you and me, and he was an authentic *seer*, one who had experienced divine vision, who had clearly known the truth of his own divine nature and the divine nature of all humanity, and proclaimed that truth to all who would hear, even at the cost of his own life.

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NOTES:

1. For more of a mystic's perspective on the life of Jesus, see the other Articles on Jesus here, and the expanded treatment of him in Swami Abhayananda, *History of Mysticism*, Atma Books, 1987; freely downloadable at my website: www.themysticsvision.com.

* * *

13. What If Jesus Was Just Like You! **(12-23-2016)**

What if Jesus was just like you!
I know, he was God's own son come down to save us—
But what if—just for the sake of imagining—
What if he was just a regular fellow like you,
And his mother was just a regular mother, like yours!
And somehow, when he was being baptized by John,
He experienced a great opening of his consciousness,
And God's grace came pouring in
Revealing to his awakened mind that he was made
Of God's own being, that he was in God and God was in him!

I'm just saying, what if, you know.
If it was like that, wouldn't that mean that
All the things he said apply to you as well?
That you are in God and God is in you?
That you and the Father are in essence one?
That you, as well as Jesus, are the son of God,
His own manifestation,
And that you too can know His Grace and awake
To the truth that you are a divine being in a divine world?

We all believe, of course, that he was a special case,
A singular example for men to follow;
But just imagine for a moment
That in those days his words were misconstrued
To mean that he alone was a being of God's light,
But that, in the greatness of his revelation,
He was really telling us of our own divine selves,
Born of the divine Father every one,
And destined to know Him in ourselves
And to give light in this world to honor the Father
And spread this blissful knowledge to every living soul.
Wouldn't that be great! Just think about it—
Wouldn't that be great!

* * *

14. For Those Who've Been A Long Time Sleeping (12-24-2016)

It turns out that the earth is not flat, but round, my dear;
And it circles the Sun—not the other way around.
It is also clear that it's not necessary to be born of a virgin,
Or miraculously conceived
In order to know that you're born of God's light,
That you live within Him and consist of His being,
That all this universe is made of Him.

God has revealed Himself in me as well;
Do you think that I'm special? I'm sorry; you're wrong.
Yet even a poor fool like me is able to realize God by His grace,
And know oneness with Him.
But how could that be—unless He lived within me,
And lived within every other being as well?

Do you really want to hold onto the old stories,
Even though it's clear they're untrue?
Know that each of us is made of His light,
And know that you too can experience your divinity within,
And know the truth of your oneness with Him.

Cast off superstition, the habits of the past!
So many have known Him; it can't be denied.
Wake up to the truth: we are each one of us
Sons of the almighty God.
Pray to Him who lives in your heart
That He will reveal your oneness with Him,
And enable you to reflect His light to the world.

* * *

15. The Life And Revelation of Jesus (1-21-2017)

The life and revelation of Jesus announced to the people that a virtuous and devoted man is able to win the Grace of God, and come to know directly his oneness, his identity, with the almighty God. But that divine message went unrecognized by the people; instead, a small group of men, devoted to the notion of the special relationship of Jesus to the Father, manufactured a new faith raising Jesus to a place of worship in their churches alongside the Father. They believed that Jesus came down from heaven to proclaim the message that he was a unique anomaly, a singular being identical with God. The perennial message of the mystics that *all* men are of a divine nature one with the Father once again went unheard and unheeded and remains unrecognized and unacknowledged to this day.¹

Jesus had seen in an inner revelation that he was a manifestation of the Father, as was all that was created. He was not portraying himself as a special manifestation of God but was revealing the universal truth of human existence: that we are born in God and consist—each of us—of His divine Light. He asked all men to know that Light in themselves, to live in the enlightened awareness of their true being, and to manifest that Light in the world of men.

* * *

NOTE:

1. We can scarcely imagine how unheard of and how inexplicable were the occurrences of mystical experience in earlier times and civilizations. Not only were the people of Jesus' time and place unfamiliar with the phenomena, people of all subsequent centuries, up to and including our own, have been woefully uneducated regarding the nature and occurrence of the unitive or nondual experience, that interior revelation of identity with the divine universal Mind. Even today, there are only a few Western scholars and academics familiar with the pancultural and panhistoric occurrence of mystical experience, and fewer still who have actually experienced it.

* * *

16. The Truth About Jesus (5-26-2017)

No one in their right mind would disparage Jesus, the great mystic-martyr of the 1st century. I, for one, have often stated that, in my opinion, of all the enlightened men gifted by God's revelation, he is at the forefront as teacher and representative of God's truth. But, in the interest of truth, I must insist on pointing out the harmful fallacies perpetuated by the unilluminated organizers of what came to be called Christianity—harmful fallacies that are perpetuated to this day.

Those early followers of the teachings of Jesus may be excused their zealous intent to form an organization that spread and perpetuated those teachings, but, like many others before them, they mistakenly felt that it was necessary to deify their leader in order to guarantee his place in the eyes of the people as a singular authority, and so he was designated as the sole progeny of God, being both God and man, worthy of being worshiped and adulated as Divinity itself. This strategy did indeed work very well for centuries, and the simple people wholeheartedly accepted this doctrine as Gospel. Having been passed down from generation to generation, today this imaginative notion has attained the status of an unassailable tradition.

But this tradition also brought along with it a negative consequence as well: mere man was henceforth relegated to a world where he could only aspire to a divine status, but he could never attain it. That status was reserved for Jesus, 'the Son of God'. The Church had essentially declared that there were two kinds of beings: the divine and the human. Jesus is divine, and the rest of us are mere humans. And that doctrine tended to not only dampen but deaden the innate aspirations of man to know his own divine identity.

Nevertheless, throughout history, God continued to reveal to a few mere men the truth of their own divine nature. Like Jesus, so long ago, they experienced in clear vision that they are in God, and that God is in them, that they are truly made of God and one with Him. These men knew that they were not “sons of God” in any literally meaningful sense; they were not different in the manner of their paternity or their conception than any other men, and yet the revelation of their divinity had come to them. Therefore, it was readily apparent to them that Jesus, who had experienced what they had experienced, was not necessarily different in kind from them, but that, in fact, all men are manifestations of the one Divine Father of us all.

Today, we may no longer regard Jesus as the Son of God, or even as a special manifestation of God; but we must not, on this account, regard Jesus any the less, for, make no mistake: Jesus—like all who become illumined and who live to serve God as His spokesman—was chosen and empowered by the Father. The life and mission of Jesus—in fact *everything* that occurs in this world—is conceived, enacted, and accomplished by God. Jesus may no longer be hailed as the sole progeny of God, but he and all of his illumined brothers and sisters throughout the world stand as proof of the ability of every single person to know their own divinity by the gracious gift of God.

The duality between human and divine does not exist; and yet there remains a distinction between those who *know* the truth of their divinity and those who do not. Ultimately, your religion is not about the status of Jesus, nor about having faith in Jesus to save you; it's about you. It's about you becoming what Jesus was: A man illumined by God. And that will happen only by the bountiful Grace of God.

Your only spiritual task is to open your heart to Him. Seek Him in silence. Seek Him in the long dark night. If your heart is open and pure, He will come. He will illumine you as He illumined Jesus. Then you too will be a man illumined by God, and your life will be joyfully fulfilled. The enlightening truth is revealed by God to those whom He chooses, and only they know with utmost certainty the marvelous truth that He alone exists, that He is our very substance, that we are all contained in, sustained in, and united in Him.

* * *

17. The Astrological Chart of Jesus (1-24-2017)

No matter how much we think we know about historical persons and events, we cannot really know the truth about those persons and events unless we were there and witnessed them personally. One of the most deliberated persons and events in history is Jesus, known as the Christ—his birth, enlightenment, and death—and yet we can never know for certain what exactly transpired and when. We can never have an accurate picture of these three stages of Jesus’ story—his birth, his enlightenment, and his death; nonetheless, many have formulated their own opinions regarding his story, and here are my own, equally fallible, opinions, or rather, suggested possibilities:

Readers of my book, *The Supreme Self*, are aware that my own spiritual enlightenment coincided with a secondary progression of my natal Sun to a conjunction with the position of my natal Neptune. As it so happens, this same progression of the Sun to Neptune also accompanied the Self-realization of my former teacher, Swami Muktananda, as I have documented in the aforementioned book. And while I have not found any evidence that this progression of the Sun to Neptune is a universal feature of the enlightenment experience, I thought it might be appropriate and useful to apply it to the occasion of Jesus’ great spiritual awakening that coincided with his baptism by his teacher, John. Once we factor in the several historical changes made to the calendar over the years, we discover that Jesus was born in what today we regard as 2 B.C., and using the indications suggested by astrological reckoning, I was able to come up with a probable birth date of October 12, in the year of 2 B.C. The chart constructed for this date yields surprisingly good results when we progress the natal Sun to a conjunction with Neptune, occurring when Jesus was 28 years old. Here, for your consideration, is what I believe is Jesus’ natal chart:

BIRTH

Jesus

12 October -0001 (2 BC) 00:50:00 AM

Bethlehem, Israel

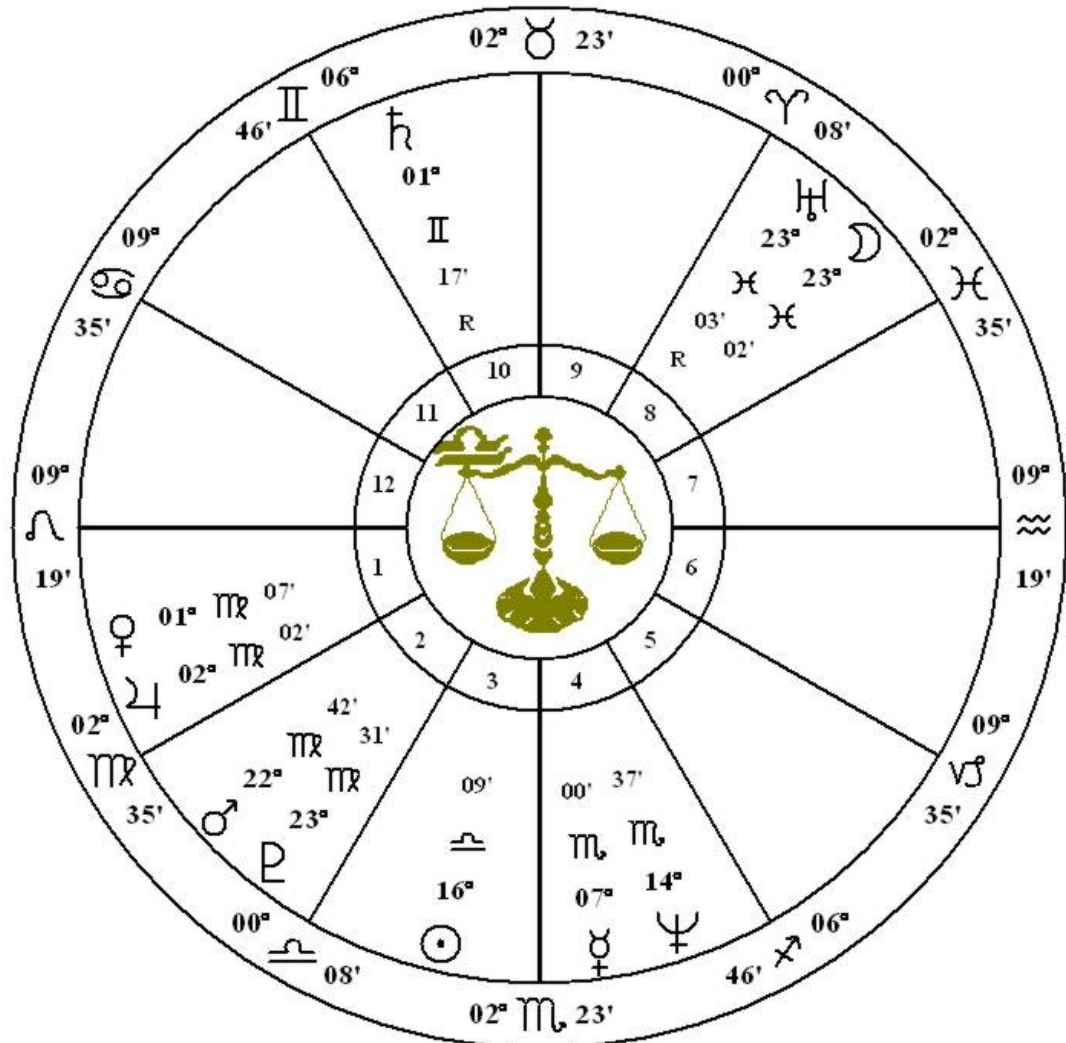
Time Zone: -02:20:48 (LT)

Longitude: 035° E 12'

Latitude: 31° N 43'

Placidus Houses

Tropical Zodiac



Jesus is traditionally regarded as having been born in the middle of the night, and I have timed his birth at just before 1:00 AM. This natal chart presents several significant features: one of the most considerable is an exact Moon-Uranus conjunction in Pisces in the 8th House, signifying a native who is deeply mystical and intuitive. It is also indicative of a sudden and unusual death. That Moon-Uranus conjunction is precisely opposed to a Mars-Pluto conjunction in Virgo in the 2nd House. On the personal level, the Mars-Pluto conjunction signifies a tremendous amount of personal spiritual energy (*shakti*), as well as courage and endurance. The 3rd House Libra Sun, along with the Leo Ascendant, signifies that the native is an attractive and appealing speaker and communicator, but if we regard the Sun's position as his 1st Solar House, then the Mars-Pluto conjunction becomes his 12th Solar House, representing the violent karmic destiny secretly awaiting him in opposition to his unique talent and mission in service to God as represented by the Moon-Uranus conjunction in his 8th (6th Solar) House.

The Venus-Jupiter conjunction, which might well have appeared as the legendary “bright star shining in the east” that drew the magi to Jesus' birthplace, also gives a strong indication of his inherent powerful spiritual authority as well as his physical attractiveness, as it occurs in his 1st (12th Solar) House. This Venus-Jupiter conjunction forms an exact trine to Saturn in his 10th (Solar 8th) House, suggesting the permanent value of the effects brought about by his brief spiritual career and also the tragic difficulties and deadly circumstances that ended his life and career. Mercury in proximity to the natal Neptune in Scorpio foreshadows the Neptunian spiritual realization that comes when, at age 28, he is initiated by John the Baptist on the banks of the river Jordan.

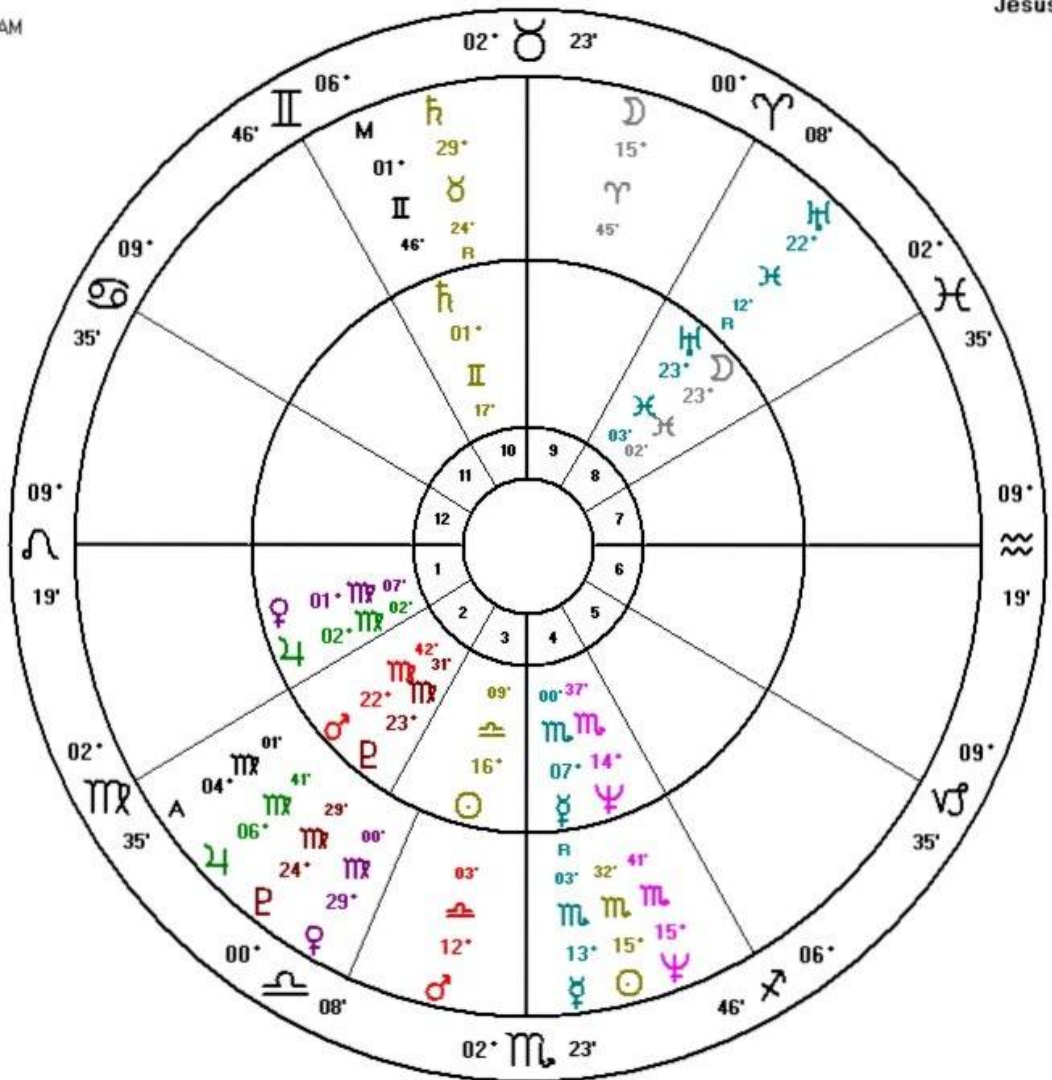
Here, in the outer wheel, is the progressed chart for Jesus' baptism and spiritual awakening at age 28 superimposed on his natal chart in the inner wheel:

ENLIGHTENMENT

Inner Chart
Jesus III
 12 October -0001 (2 BC) 00:50:00 AM
 Bethlehem, Israel
 Time Zone: -02:20:48 (LT)
 Longitude: 035° E 12'
 Latitude: 31° N 43'

House Cusps based on chart of Jesus III

Jesus III Prg t
 10
 2nd



The Progressed chart for this baptism event represents the opening of Jesus' mind to God's gracious revelation and shows the exact conjunction of the progressed Sun to Neptune in Pisces (4th House), with Mercury sharing in the enjoined forces. It was the magical mystical experience portrayed here that opened to his inner soul the awareness that he himself was a manifestation of the divine Father, as was all that existed in this world. The Moon, now progressed in Aries to an opposition (Full Moon) to the natal Sun, signifies the occurrence of both a culmination and a new beginning in Jesus' brief but eventful life. The following year saw his Saturn Return, on June 6, 29 A.D., symbolically confirming that new beginning; and the following few years saw the fulfillment of Jesus' mission of spreading the word of God, though the great mystic's martyrdom, his destined violent end, surreptitiously continued to move nearer every day.

What can we look for in a chart for the final moment of Jesus' life? Many scholars have made their guesses as to the date of Jesus' demise based on hints found in the scriptures: Isaac Newton determined that Jesus died on April 3, in the year 33 A.D.; others preferred April 7, in the year 30 A.D. But the various scholars who made their speculations known did not have the ability to judge from the vantage point of the knowledge of the corresponding astrological aspects, which alone provides some extremely reliable indicators. My own investigation has settled on the date of April 23, at 9:40 p.m., in the year 33 A.D. This date is not in close proximity to the Feast of Passover, as suggested in the scriptures, and I can only surmise that Jesus was held for some days prior to his actual crucifixion, a delay that was not mentioned in the scriptures. Here is the chart that best appears to me to be the time and date of Jesus' death on the cross, superimposed in the outer wheel upon the inner wheel chart of his birth:

DEATH

Inner Chart

Jesus

12 October -0001 (2 BC) 00:50:00 AM

Bethlehem, Israel

Time Zone: -02:20:48 (LT)

Longitude: 035° E 12'

Latitude: 31° N 43'

House Cusps based on chart of Jesus

Outer Chart

Jesus

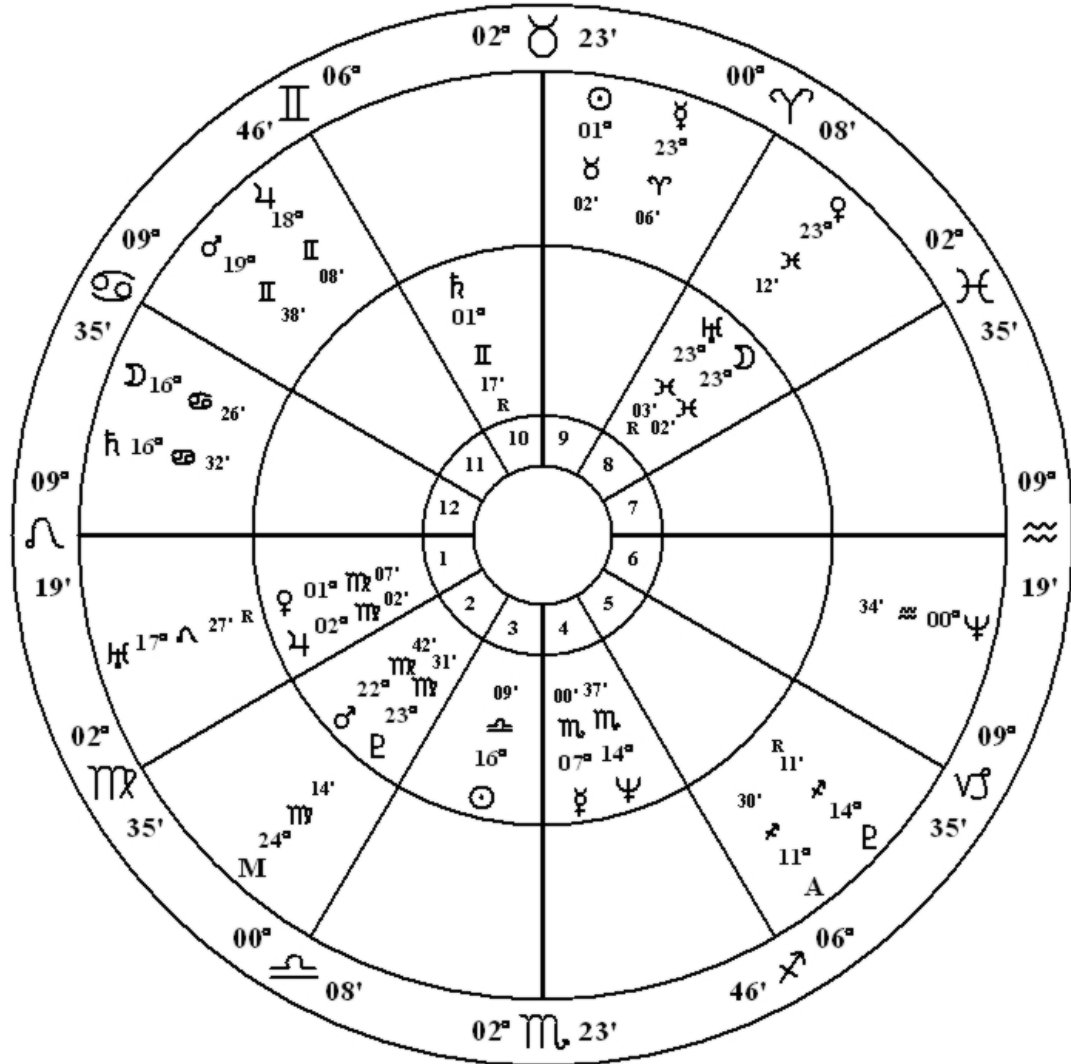
23 April 0033 09:40:00 PM

Jerusalem, Israel

Time Zone: -02:20:56 (LT)

Longitude: 035° E 14'

Latitude: 31° N 46'



It will be readily apparent to the astrologically informed reader that, in the outer wheel chart of Jesus' death, the transiting Moon-Saturn conjunction in Cancer, falling in the 12th House, is exactly square to Jesus' natal Sun (in the inner wheel), effectively announcing the eclipse of his life force. The transiting Sun (9th House, outer wheel) is conjunct Jesus' Midheaven and exactly trine his natal Venus-Jupiter conjunction in the 1st House (inner wheel), indicating the happy culmination of his successful spiritual mission. Transiting Venus (in the eighth House, outer wheel) is exactly conjunct Jesus' natal Moon-Uranus conjunction and opposing his natal Mars-Pluto conjunction (inner wheel), signifying a sweet end, the blissful release of Jesus from all worldly and fleshly tribulations, and the final awareness of his own infinite and eternal joy.

* * *

—END OF VOLUME ONE—